

## THE REASON OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT URGED AGAINST PRELATY

### THE PREFACE.

IN THE publishing of human laws, which for the most part aim not beyond the good of civil society, to set them barely forth to the people without reason, or preface, like a physical prescript,<sup>1</sup> or only with threatenings, as it were a lordly command, in the judgment of Plato was thought to be done neither generously nor wisely. His advice was, seeing that persuasion certainly is a more winning and more manlike way to keep men in obedience than fear, that to such laws as were of principal moment, there should be used as an induction some well-tempered discourse, showing how good, how gainful, how happy it must needs be to live according to honesty and justice; which being uttered with those native colors and graces of speech, as true eloquence,<sup>2</sup> the daughter of virtue, can best bestow upon her mother's praises, would so incite, and in a manner charm, the multitude into the love of that which is really good, as to embrace it ever after, not of custom and awe,

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<sup>1</sup> *physical prescript*: medical prescription. Milton assumed our familiarity with Plato's *Laws*. Here he recalls Plato's principle that, because all law is founded on reason, every individual law should carry a statement of its rational grounds as a part of its official formulation. In Book IV (720A) Plato compares good lawgivers to free-born, professional physicians who prescribe scientifically and explain the nature of every disease and its treatment to their patients; while bad lawgivers resemble the slave doctors to whom the Athenians sent their slaves for rough and ready treatment. The principle is immediately illustrated by the self-justifying form which Plato gives to an ideal law against celibacy, but its most conspicuous illustrations are the proem to the law against sacrilege (854 B.C.) and the entire tenth book, which introduces a similar law with an elaborate statement of Plato's theology.

<sup>2</sup> *True eloquence* is contrasted with the false eloquence which Plato regarded as the worst enemy of virtue and sound administration of law.

which most men do, but of choice and purpose, with true and constant delight. But this practice we may learn from a better and more ancient authority than any heathen writer hath to give us, and indeed being a point of so high wisdom and worth, how could it be but we should find it in that book within whose sacred context all wisdom is infolded? Moses,<sup>3</sup> therefore, the only lawgiver that we can believe to have been visibly taught of God, knowing how vain it was to write laws to men whose hearts were not first seasoned with the knowledge of God and of his works, began from the book of Genesis, as a prologue to his laws (which Josephus<sup>4</sup> right well hath noted), that the nation of the Jews, reading therein the universal goodness of God to all creatures in the creation, and his peculiar favor to them in his election of Abraham, their ancestor, from whom they could derive so many blessings upon themselves, might be moved to obey sincerely by knowing so good a reason of their obedience. If then, in the administration of civil justice and under the obscurity of ceremonial rites, such care was had by the wisest of the heathen, and by Moses among the Jews, to instruct them at least in a general reason of that government to

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<sup>3</sup> Moses' prophetic authority was one of the central interests of Calvinism. "For when God had chosen Moses to be his prophet," said Calvin, "he not onely commaunded him to speake, but also tooke him vp into the mountaine, and separated him from the companie of men, to the ende that when he should come to set forth his Law, the people should accept him as an Angell, and not as a mortal creature. He was there fortie daies without eating or drinking, to shewe that he was exempted from the common sort of men, and that God had taken him vp as it were into his heavenly glorie. And when he came down againe, his face shone as bright as it had beene another sunne. Where as men attribute hornes unto him, it is saide that he had sunne beames rounde about him." *The Sermons of M. Iohn Calvin upon Deuteronomie*. Translated by Arthur Golding. Pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> In the *Antiquities of the Jews* (Thomas Lodge's translation, edition of 1640, pp. 2-3) Josephus says that "Moses . . . began not his ordinances with the treatise of contracts and covenants which we practice with one another, as other lawmakers are accustomed to do, but he hath lifted their spirits on high, to the end they might think on God, and on the ornament of this world made by him, perswading that the most accomplished work among all those things which God had made in the world, was the creation of us men. After he had made them capable of things concerning piety, then might he more easily perswade them in the rest."

which their subjection was required, how much more ought the members of the church, under the gospel, seek to inform their understanding in the reason of that government which the church claims to have over them: especially for that the church hath in her immediate cure those inner parts and affections of the mind where the seat of reason is, having power to examine our spiritual knowledge and to demand from us in God's behalf a service entirely reasonable. But because about the manner and order of this government, whether it ought to be presbyterial or prelatical, such endless question, or rather uproar, is arisen in this land, as may be justly termed, what the fever is to the physicians, the eternal reproach of our divines, whilst other profound clerks of late, greatly, as they conceive, to the advancement of prelacy, are so earnestly meting out the Lydian proconsular Asia,<sup>5</sup> to make good the prime metropolis of Ephesus, as if some of our prelates in all haste meant to change their soil and become neighbours to the English bishop of Chalcedon;<sup>6</sup> and whilst good Breerwood<sup>7</sup> as busily bestirs himself in our vulgar tongue, to divide precisely the three patriarchates of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch; and whether to any of these England doth belong: I shall in the meanwhile not cease to hope through the mercy and grace of Christ, the head and husband of his church, that England shortly is to belong, neither to see patriarchal nor see prelatical, but to the faithful feeding and

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<sup>5</sup> *Lydian proconsular Asia* alludes to Archbishop Ussher's *Geographical and Historicall Disquisition*, a discussion of which may be found in Introduction, # 27.

<sup>6</sup> The contemporary bishop of Chalcedon, Richard Smith (1566–1655), had been consecrated 12 January, 1625, by Cardinal Spada, then Papal Nuncio in Paris, to succeed William Bishop as Urban VIII's vicar apostolic for England and Scotland. He had been educated in part at Oxford, but went to Rome in 1586 to study under Cardinal Bellarmine. In 1592 he was ordained specifically for the English mission. As vicar general he was indiscreet and in 1629, when the Vatican ceased to recognize him, he took refuge in France, where he was protected by the Sorbonne and by Cardinal Richelieu. In 1635, when Gregorio Panzani was negotiating for the Vatican with Secretary Windebank and Charles, there seems to have been a proposal to reestablish the Bishop of Chalcedon in London as the acknowledged leader of the English Catholics.

<sup>7</sup> For Edward Breerwood's *Patriarchall Government of the Ancient Church* see Introduction # 27.

disciplining of that ministerial order which the blessed apostles constituted throughout the churches; and this, I shall essay to prove, can be no other than that of presbyters<sup>8</sup> and deacons. And if any man incline to think I undertake a task too difficult for my years, I trust through the supreme enlightening assistance far otherwise; for my years, be they few or many, what imports it? So they bring reason, let that be looked on: and for the task, from hence that the question in hand is so needful to be known at this time, chiefly by every meaner capacity, and contains in it the explication of many admirable and heavenly privileges reached out to us by the gospel, I conclude the task must be easy: God having to this end ordained his gospel to be the revelation of his power and wisdom in Christ Jesus. And this is one depth of his wisdom, that he could so plainly reveal so great a measure of it to the gross, distorted apprehension of decayed mankind. Let others, therefore, dread and shun the Scriptures for their darkness; I shall wish I may deserve to be reckoned among those who admire and dwell upon them for their clearness. And this seems to be the cause why in those places of holy writ, wherein is treated of church-government, the reasons thereof are not formally and professedly set down, because to him that heeds attentively the drift and scope of Christian profession, they easily imply themselves; which thing further to explain, having now prefaced enough, I shall no longer defer.

## CHAPTER I.

*That Church-government is prescribed in the Gospel, and that to say otherwise is unsound.*

THE FIRST and greatest reason of church-government we may securely, with the assent of many on the adverse part, affirm to

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<sup>8</sup> *presbyters*: the Greek word which is transliterated in this way, and from which *priest* is ultimately derived, meant literally "elders." Cf. Introduction #16.

be because we find it so ordained and set out to us by the appointment of God in the scriptures; but whether this be presbyterial or prelatical, it cannot be brought to the scanning, until I have said what is meet to some who do not think it for the ease of their inconsequent opinions to grant that church discipline is platformed in the Bible, but that it is left to the discretion of men. To this conceit of theirs I answer that it is both unsound and untrue. For there is not that thing in the world of more grave and urgent importance throughout the whole life of man, than is discipline. What need I instance? He that hath read with judgment of nations and commonwealths, of cities and camps, of peace and war, sea and land, will readily agree that the flourishing and decaying of all civil societies, all the moments and turnings of human occasions, are moved to and fro as upon the axle of discipline. So that whatsoever power or sway in mortal things weaker men have attributed to fortune, I durst with more confidence (the honor of Divine Providence ever saved) ascribe either to the vigor or the slackness of discipline. Nor is there any sociable perfection in this life, civil or sacred, that can be above discipline; but she is that which with her musical chords preserves and holds all the parts thereof together. Hence in those perfect armies of Cyrus in Xenophon,<sup>9</sup> and Scipio<sup>10</sup> in the Roman stories, the excellence of military skill was esteemed, not by the not needing, but by the readiest submitting to the edicts of their commander. And certainly discipline is not only the removal of disorder; but if any visible shape can be given to divine things,

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<sup>9</sup> In the *Cyropaedia* I, vi, Xenophon describes Cyrus' discipline of the Persian soldiers and quotes (20-21) a conversation between him and his father, Cambyzes, in which Cyrus praises the obedience which is secured by honor for the obedient and punishment for the disobedient, but in reply is taught by his father the difference between compulsory and willing submission to a general's commands.

<sup>10</sup> Milton had in mind the stress laid upon the discipline of Publius Cornelius Scipio, surnamed Africanus for his victories over Hannibal in the Second Punic War, by both Livy and Dio Cassius. A typical instance is Dio's account (Zonaras, 9, 11) of Scipio's creation of an effectively disciplined army out of raw Sicilian conscripts in 205 B.C.



the very visible shape and image of virtue,<sup>11</sup> whereby she is not only seen in the regular gestures and motions of her heavenly paces as she walks, but also makes the harmony of her voice audible to mortal ears. Yea, the angels themselves, in whom no disorder is feared, as the apostle that saw them in his rapture describes, are distinguished and quaternioned into their celestial principedoms and satrapies, according as God himself hath writ his imperial decrees through the great provinces of heaven. The state also of the blessed in paradise, though never so perfect, is not therefore left without discipline, whose golden surveying reed<sup>12</sup> marks out and measures every quarter and circuit of New Jerusalem. Yet is it not to be conceived that those eternal effluences of sanctity and love in the glorified saints should by this means be confined and cloyed with repetition of that which is prescribed, but that our happiness may orb itself into a thousand vagancies<sup>13</sup> of glory and delight, and with a kind of eccentrical equation be, as it were, an invariable planet of joy and felicity; how much less can we believe that God would leave his frail and feeble, though not less beloved church here below, to the perpetual stumble of conjecture and disturbance in this our dark voyage, without the card and compass of discipline? Which is so hard to be of man's making that we may see even in the guidance of a civil state to worldly happiness, it is not for every learned or every wise man, though many of them consult in common, to invent or frame a discipline: but if it be at all the work of man, it must be of such a one as is a true knower of himself, and himself in whom contemplation and practice, wit, prudence, fortitude, and eloquence must be rarely met, both to comprehend the hidden causes of things and span in his thoughts all the various effects that

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<sup>11</sup> Compare the "very visible shape and image of virtue" with the incarnation of "Virtue in her shape how lovely" in the angel Zephon in *P.L.* IV, 848, and with Satan's confession to Christ in *P.R.* III, 11:

thy heart

Contains of good, wise, just, the perfect shape.

<sup>12</sup> For the angelic discipline and its golden surveying reed cf. Introduction #18.

<sup>13</sup> *vagancies*: extravagances or varieties.

passion or complexion<sup>14</sup> can work in man's nature; and hereto must his hand be at defiance with gain, and his heart in all virtues heroic;<sup>15</sup> so far is it from the ken of these wretched projectors of ours that bescrawl their pamphlets every day with new forms of government for our church. And therefore all the ancient lawgivers were either truly inspired, as Moses, or were such men as with authority enough might give it out to be so, as Minos, Lycurgus, Numa,<sup>16</sup> because they wisely forethought that men would never quietly submit to such a discipline as had not more of God's hand in it than man's. To come within the narrowness of household government, observation will show us many deep counsellors of state and judges to demean themselves incorruptly in the settled course of affairs, and many worthy preachers upright in their lives, powerful in their audience: but look upon either of these men where they are left to their own disciplining<sup>17</sup> at home, and you shall soon perceive, for all their single knowledge and uprightness, how deficient they are in the regulating of their own family; not only

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<sup>14</sup> *complexion*: temperament or character. Milton is thinking of Plato's ideal lawgiver, who must observe all the pains and pleasures, the desires and strong passions of his citizens in all the relations of life, and know how to control them by laws apportioning praise and blame. (*Laws* I, 631E.)

<sup>15</sup> "Masculous resolution and strenuous action are the two twins of an Heroick Spirit," Alexander Leighton wrote in *An Appeal to Parliament*, p. 266. Cf. Introduction #18.

<sup>16</sup> Milton's thought was a commonplace. It was put with a slightly different emphasis by Machiavelli: "Truly never was there yet any maker of extraordinary lawes in a nation, that had not this recourse [*i.e.* Numa's] to God, for otherwise the lawes had not bin accepted. For many severall goods are knowne by a wise man, which have not such evident reasons in themselves, that he by perswasion can quickly make others conceive them. Therefore the wise men that would free themselves of this difficulty, have recourse to a God; so did *Lycurgus*, so *Solon*, so many others whose designe was the same with theirs." *Machiavels Discourses*, translated by E.D. (1636), pp. 62-3. (*Discourses on Titus Livius* I, xi.) Cf. Introduction #9 and *Of Education*, note 73.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Calvin: "In fellowship, yea no house, though it have but a small household, can be kept in right state without discipline; the same is much more necessarie in the Church, whose state ought to be most orderly of all." *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Translated by Thomas Norton, 1634) IV, xii, 1; p. 604. Cf. Introduction #18-19.

in what may concern the virtuous and decent composure of their minds in their several places, but, that which is of a lower and easier performance, the right possessing of the outward vessel, their body, in health or sickness, rest or labor, diet or abstinence, whereby to render it more pliant to the soul and useful to the commonwealth: which if men were but as good to discipline themselves as some are to tutor their horses and hawks, it could not be so gross in most households. If then it appear so hard and so little known, how to govern a house well, which is thought of so easy discharge and for every man's undertaking, what skill of man, what wisdom, what parts can be sufficient to give laws and ordinances to the elect household of God? If we could imagine that he had left it at random without his provident and gracious ordering, who is he so arrogant, so presumptuous, that durst dispose and guide the living ark of the Holy Ghost,<sup>18</sup> though he should find it wandering in the field of Bethshemesh, without the conscious warrant of some high calling? But no profane insolence can parallel that which our prelates dare avouch, to drive outrageously and shatter the holy ark of the church, not borne upon their shoulders with pains and labor in the word, but drawn with rude oxen, their officials, and their own brute inventions. Let them make shows of reforming while they will, so long as the church is mounted upon the prelatical cart, and not, as it ought, between the hands of the ministers, it will but shake and totter; and he that sets to his hand, though with a good intent to hinder the shogging of it in this unlawful waggonry wherein it rides, let him beware it be not fatal to him, as it was to Uzzah. Certainly if God be the father of his family the

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<sup>18</sup> Milton was thinking of the story in II Samuel vi of David's attempt to move the ark of God in state, "on a new cart," drawn by oxen, to a proper resting place. But "when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God." I Samuel vi, 19 relates God's destruction of fifty thousand of the Philistines of Bethshemesh "because they had looked into the ark of the Lord."



church, wherein could he express that name more than in training it up under his own allwise and dear economy, not turning it loose to the havoc of strangers and wolves,<sup>19</sup> that would ask no better plea than this, to do in the church of Christ whatever humor, faction, policy, or licentious will would prompt them to? Again, if Christ be the church's husband,<sup>20</sup> expecting her to be presented before him a pure unspotted virgin, in what could he show his tender love to her more than in prescribing his own ways which he best knew would be to the improvement of her health and beauty, with much greater care doubtless than the Persian king could appoint for his queen Esther those maiden dietings and set prescriptions of baths and odors,<sup>21</sup> which may tender her at last more amiable to his eye? For of any age or sex, most unfitly may a virgin be left to an uncertain and arbitrary education. Yea, though she be well instructed, yet is she still under a more strait tuition, especially if betrothed. In like manner the church bearing the same resemblance, it were not reason to think she should be left destitute of that care which is as necessary and proper to her as instruction. For public preaching indeed is the gift of the Spirit, working as best seems to his secret will, but discipline is the practic work of preaching directed and applied as is most requisite to particular duty; without which it were all one to the benefit of souls, as it would be to the cure of bodies, if all the physicians in London should get into the several pulpits of the city, and, assembling all the diseased in every parish, should begin a learned lecture of pleurisies, palsies, lethargies, to which perhaps none there

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<sup>19</sup> *wolves*: cf. Introduction #21.

<sup>20</sup> "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. xxi, 2.) "Christ vouchsafeth so to honour marriage," wrote Calvin, "that he willeth it to be an image of his holy conjoyning with the Church." (*Institutes* IV, xii, 24; p. 615.)

<sup>21</sup> "Six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women" are mentioned in Esther ii, 12, as having been prescribed for Esther before she was admitted to her first meeting with her lover, King Ahasuerus. Allegorical interpretation of the story easily recognized Esther as a type of the Church.

present were inclined; and so, without so much as feeling one pulse, or giving the least order to any skilful apothecary, should dismiss'em from time to time, some groaning, some languishing, some expiring, with this only charge, to look well to themselves and do as they hear.<sup>22</sup> Of what excellence and necessity then church-discipline is, how beyond the faculty of man to frame and how dangerous to be left to man's invention, who would be every foot turning it to sinister ends; how properly also it is the work of God as father and of Christ as husband of the church, we have by thus much heard.

## CHAPTER II.

*That Church-government is set down in holy Scripture, and that to say otherwise is untrue.*

AS THEREFORE it is unsound to say that God hath not appointed any set government in his church, so it is untrue. Of the time of the law there can be no doubt; for to let pass the first institution of priests and Levites, which is too clear to be insisted upon, when the temple came to be built, which in plain judgment could breed no essential change, either in religion or in the priestly government, yet God, to show how little he could endure that men should be tampering and contriving in his worship, though in things of less regard, gave to David for Solomon not only a pattern and model of the temple, but a direction for the courses of the priests and Levites and for all the work of their service. At the return from the captivity things were only restored after the ordinance of Moses and David; or if the least alteration be to be found, they had with them inspired men, prophets; and it were not sober to say they did aught of moment without divine intimation. In

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<sup>22</sup> The allusion is to a slightly later part of the passage in Plato's *Laws* (720C) to which Milton has already referred in his opening sentence. Plato says that the slave doctors are absurdly indifferent to the case histories of their patients. Cf. note 191 below.

the prophecy of Ezekiel,<sup>23</sup> from the fortieth chapter onward, after the destruction of the temple, God, by his prophet, seeking to wean the hearts of the Jews from their old law, to expect a new and more perfect reformation under Christ, sets out before their eyes the stately fabric and constitution of his church, with all the ecclesiastical functions appertaining: indeed the description is as sorted best to the apprehension of those times, typical and shadowy, but in such manner as never yet came to pass, nor never must literally, unless we mean to annihilate the gospel. But so exquisite and lively the description is in portraying the new state of the church, and especially in those points where government seems to be most active, that both Jews and Gentiles might have good cause to be assured that God, whenever he meant to reform his church, never intended to leave the government thereof, delineated here in such curious architecture, to be patched afterwards and varnished over with the devices and embellishings of man's imagination. Did God take such delight in measuring out the pillars, arches, and doors of a material temple? Was he so punctual and circumspect in lavers,<sup>24</sup> altars, and sacrifices soon after to be abrogated, lest any of these should have been made contrary to his mind? Is not a far more perfect work, more agreeable to his perfection in the most perfect state of the church militant, the new alliance of God to man? Should not he rather now by his own prescribed discipline have cast his line and level upon the soul of man, which is his rational temple, and by the divine square and compass thereof form and regen-

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<sup>23</sup> The elaborate directions for the service of the Hebrew priests in Leviticus xxi-xxiv and of the Levites in Numbers i, iii, and iv, and the detailed specifications for Solomon's temple in I Kings vi and II Chronicles iii and iv, and for the reconstructed temple of Ezra and Nehemiah as it was ideally designed by Ezekiel, were traditionally taken by the Reformers as types of the government of the Church. Cf. Introduction #31.

<sup>24</sup> *lavers*: vessels for washing sacrifices. In Solomon's temple, beside the great laver or molten sea where the priests washed their hands, ten raised lavers of brass are described in I Kings vii, 27-39, as standing, five on the north and five on the south side of the court of the priests, for the cleansing of sacrifices.

erate in us the lovely shapes of virtues and graces, the sooner to edify and accomplish that immortal stature of Christ's body, which is his church, in all her glorious lineaments and proportions? And that this indeed God hath done for us in the gospel we shall see with open eyes, not under a veil. We may pass over the history of the Acts and other places, turning only to those epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus, where the spiritual eye may discern more goodly and gracefully erected than all the magnificence of temple or tabernacle, such a heavenly structure of evangelic discipline, so diffusive of knowledge and charity to the prosperous increase and growth of the church, that it cannot be wondered if that elegant and artful symmetry of the promised new temple in Ezekiel, and all those sumptuous things under the law, were made to signify the inward beauty and splendor of the Christian church thus governed. And whether this be commanded, let it now be judged. St. Paul, after his preface to the first of Timothy, which he concludes in the seventeenth verse with Amen, enters upon the subject of this epistle, which is to establish the church government, with a command: "This charge I commit to thee, son Timothy; according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare."<sup>25</sup> Which is plain enough thus expounded: This charge I commit to thee, wherein I now go about to instruct thee how thou shalt set up church discipline, that thou mightest war a good warfare, bearing thyself constantly and faithfully in the ministry, which, in the first to the Corinthians, is also called a warfare.<sup>26</sup> And so after a kind of parenthesis concerning Hymenæus, he returns to his command, though under the mild word of exhorting (chap. ii. v. 1), "I exhort therefore;"—as if he had interrupted his former command by the occasional mention of Hymenæus.<sup>27</sup> More beneath in the fourteenth verse of the third chapter,

<sup>25</sup> For St. Paul's charge to Timothy in I Timothy i, 18, cf. Introduction #25.

<sup>26</sup> Milton may have thought of the allusion in I Corinthians ix, 7, to the ministry of Paul and Barnabas as "a warfare."

<sup>27</sup> In the last verse of the first chapter of I Timothy, Hymenæus is mentioned as one of those who "concerning faith have made shipwreck."



when he hath delivered the duties of bishops or presbyters and deacons, not once naming any other order in the church, he thus adds; "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; (such necessity it seems there was;) but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God." From this place it may be justly asked whether Timothy by this here written might know what was to be known concerning the orders of church governors or no. If he might, then in such a clear text as this may we know too without further jangle; if he might not, then did St. Paul write insufficiently, and moreover said not true, for he saith here he might know; and I persuade myself he did know ere this was written, but that the apostle had more regard to the instruction of us than to the informing of him. In the fifth chapter, after some other church-precepts concerning discipline, mark what a dreadful command follows (v. 21): "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that thou observe these things." And as if all were not yet sure enough, he closes up the epistle with an adjuring charge thus: "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, that thou keep this commandment:" that is, the whole commandment concerning discipline, being the main purpose of the epistle: although Hooker would fain have this denouncement referred to the particular precept going before, because the word commandment is in the singular number, not remembering that even in the first chapter of this epistle the word commandment is used in a plural sense (v. 5): "Now the end of the commandment is charity,"<sup>28</sup> and what more frequent than in like manner to say the law of Moses? So that either to restrain the significance too much, or too much to enlarge it, would make the adjuration either not so weighty or not so pertinent. And thus we find here that the rules of church discipline are not only commanded but hedged about with such a terrible impalement of commands,

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<sup>28</sup> The full verse, I Timothy i, 5, reads: "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." Cf. Introduction #32.

as he that will break through wilfully to violate the least of them, must hazard the wounding of his conscience even to death. Yet all this notwithstanding, we shall find them broken well nigh all by the fair pretenders even of the next ages. No less to the contempt of him whom they feign to be the arch-founder of prelaty, St. Peter, who, by what he writes in the fifth<sup>29</sup> chapter of his first epistle, should seem to be far another man than tradition reports him: there he commits to the presbyters only full authority both of feeding the flock and episcopating; and commands that obedience be given to them as to the mighty hand of God, which is his mighty ordinance. Yet all this was as nothing to repel the venturous boldness of innovation that ensued, changing the decrees of God that is immutable, as if they had been breathed by man. Nevertheless when Christ by these visions of St. John<sup>30</sup> foreshows the reformation of his church, he bids him take his reed and mete it out again after the first pattern, for he prescribes him no other. "Arise," said the angel, "and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein."<sup>31</sup> What is there in the world can measure men but discipline? Our word ruling imports no less. Doctrine indeed is the measure, or at least the reason of the measure, 'tis true; but unless the measure be applied to that which it is to measure, how can it actually do its proper work? Whether therefore discipline be all one with doctrine or the particular application thereof to this or that person, we all agree that doctrine must be such only as is commanded; or whether it be something really differing from doctrine, yet was

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<sup>29</sup> In the first verse of the fifth and last chapter of I Peter, which is a general charge to the clergy of the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Bithynia, and the Roman province of Asia, only the elders (*i. e.* presbyters or priests) are addressed.

<sup>30</sup> For *these visions of St. John* see note 12 above and Introduction #18.

<sup>31</sup> The passage to which Milton refers here and below is Revelation xi, 1-2; "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein."

"But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."

it only of God's appointment as being the most adequate measure of the church and her children, which is here the office of a great evangelist and the reed given him from heaven. But that part of the temple which is not thus measured, so far is it from being in God's tuition or delight, that in the following verse he rejects it; however in show and visibility it may seem a part of his church, yet inasmuch as it lies thus unmeasured, he leaves it to be trampled by the Gentiles, that is to be polluted with idolatrous and Gentilish rites and ceremonies. And that the principal reformation here foretold<sup>32</sup> is already come to pass as well in discipline as in doctrine, the state of our neighbour churches afford us to behold. Thus through all the periods and changes of the church it hath been proved that God hath still reserved to himself the right of enacting church-government.

### CHAPTER III.

*That it is dangerous and unworthy the Gospel to hold that Church-government is to be patterned by the Law, as Bishop Andrews and the Primate of Armagh maintain.*

WE MAY return now from this interposing difficulty thus removed, to affirm that, since church government is so strictly commanded in God's word, the first and greatest reason why we should submit thereto is because God hath so commanded. But whether of these two, prelaty or presbytery, can prove itself to be supported by this first and greatest reason, must be the next dispute; wherein this position is to be first laid down as granted, that I may not follow a chase rather than an argument, that one of these two and none other, is of God's ordaining; and if it be, that ordinance must be evident in the gospel. For the imperfect and obscure institution of the law, which the

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<sup>32</sup> Milton had the authority of Paraeus for saying that, "This is a generall prophesie touching the restoring of the Church being declyned under Antichrist." (*Commentary on the Revelation*, p. 211.) Cf. Introduction #18 and 22.

apostles themselves doubt<sup>33</sup> not oftentimes to vilify, cannot give rules to the complete and glorious ministration of the gospel, which looks on the law as on a child, not as on a tutor. And that the prelates have no sure foundation in the gospel, their own guiltiness doth manifest; they would not else run questing up as high as Adam to fetch their original, as 'tis said one of them lately did in public. To which assertion, had I heard it, because I see they are so insatiable of antiquity,<sup>34</sup> I should have gladly assented and confessed them yet more ancient: for Lucifer,<sup>35</sup> before Adam, was the first prelate angel, and both he, as is commonly thought, and our forefather Adam, as we all know, for aspiring above their orders were miserably degraded. But others, better advised, are content to receive their beginning from Aaron and his sons, among whom bishop Andrews<sup>36</sup> of late years, and in these times the primate of Armagh,<sup>37</sup> for their learning are reputed the best able to say what may be said in this opinion. The primate in his discourse about the original of episcopacy newly revised, begins thus: "The ground of episcopacy is fetched partly from the pattern prescribed by God in the Old Testament, and partly from the imitation thereof brought in by the apostles." Herein I must entreat to be excused of the desire I have to be satisfied, how for example the ground of episcopacy is fetched partly from the example of the Old Testament, by whom next, and by whose authority. Secondly, how the church government

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<sup>33</sup> *doubt*: hesitate. Milton thought of passages like Paul's saying that "Christ is the end of the law" (Rom. viii, 3). Cf. Introduction #31.

<sup>34</sup> *antiquity*: ancient precedent. Cf. Introduction #23-24.

<sup>35</sup> Compare the treatment of Lucifer's pride in *P. L.* I, 34-44.

<sup>36</sup> Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), to whom Milton's *Elegy III* was dedicated, was successively bishop of Chichester, Ely, and Winchester. His justification of episcopacy from the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Testament in *A summary view of the Government both of the Old and New Testament*, to which Milton refers, had been reprinted in 1641 in *Certaine Briefe Treatises*. Cf. Introduction #27.

<sup>37</sup> James Ussher (1581-1656), Archbishop of Armagh, was very unpopular at this time with the Puritans for his stand in his sermon on *The Sovereignes Power and the Subjects Duty* (Oxford, 1644). Today he is best known for his work on Biblical chronology. For the work from which Milton quotes cf. Introduction #27.



under the gospel can be rightly called an imitation of that in the Old Testament;<sup>38</sup> for that the gospel is the end and fulfilling of the law, our liberty also from the bondage of the law, I plainly read. How then the ripe age of the gospel should be put to school again and learn to govern herself from the infancy of the law, the stronger to imitate the weaker, the freeman to follow the captive, the learned to be lessoned by the rude, will be a hard undertaking to evince from any of those principles which either art or inspiration hath written. If anything done by the apostles may be drawn howsoever to a likeness of something Mosaical, if it cannot be proved that it was done of purpose in imitation, as having the right thereof grounded in nature and not in ceremony or type, it will little avail the matter. The whole Judaic law is either political (and to take pattern by that, no Christian nation ever thought itself obliged in conscience) or moral, which contains in it the observation of whatsoever is substantially and perpetually true and good, either in religion or course of life. That which is thus moral, besides what we fetch from those unwritten laws and ideas which nature hath engraven in us, the gospel, as stands with her dignity most, lectures to us from her own authentic handwriting and command, not copies out from the borrowed manuscript of a subservient scroll, by way of imitating: as well might she be said in her sacrament of water to imitate the baptism of John.<sup>39</sup> What though she retain excommunication used in the synagogue, retain the morality of the sabbath, she does not therefore imitate the law, her underling, but perfect her. All that was morally delivered from the law to the gospel in the office of the priests and Levites was that there should be a ministry set apart to teach and discipline the church, both which duties the apostles thought good to commit to the presbyters. And if any distinction of honor were to be made

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<sup>38</sup> Compare Alexander Leighton's typical denial that England was bound by either the political or religious constitutions of the Jews. Cf. Introduction #31.

<sup>39</sup> In Acts xix, 1-5, Paul persuades some disciples who had received the "baptism of repentance" of John the Baptist, to accept baptism "in the name of the Lord Jesus."

among them, they directed it should be to those not that only rule well, but especially to those that labor in the word and doctrine.\* By which we are taught that laborious teaching is the most honorable prelaty that one minister can have above another in the gospel; if, therefore, the superiority of bishopship be grounded on the priesthood as a part of the moral law, it cannot be said to be an imitation; for it were ridiculous that morality should imitate morality, which ever was the same thing. This very word of patterning or imitating excludes episcopacy from the solid and grave ethical law, and betrays it to be a mere child of ceremony, or likelier some misbegotten thing that having plucked the gay feathers of her obsolete bravery to hide her own deformed bareness, now vaunts and glories in her stolen plumes. In the meanwhile, what danger there is against the very life of the gospel to make in anything the typical law her pattern, and how impossible in that which touches the priestly government, I shall use such light as I have received, to lay open. It cannot be unknown by what expressions the holy apostle St. Paul spares not to explain to us the nature and condition of the law, calling those ordinances which were the chief and essential offices of the priests, the elements and rudiments of the world, both weak and beggarly.<sup>40</sup> Now to breed and bring up the children of the promise, the heirs of liberty and grace, under such a kind of government as is professed to be but an imitation of that ministry which engendered to bondage the sons of Agar,<sup>41</sup> how can this be but a foul injury and derogation, if not a cancelling of that birthright and

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\* Milton's note: I Tim. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Milton alludes to Paul's protest in Galatians iv, 9, against the desire of some converted Jews to return "again to the weak and beggarly elements" of the Mosaic law.

<sup>41</sup> *Agar*: Hagar, Abraham's bondwoman, who bore his son Ishmael. In Galatians iv, 21-31, Paul makes the two sons of Abraham, "the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman," an allegory of "the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all. . . .

"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."

immunity which Christ hath purchased for us with his blood? For the ministration of the law,<sup>42</sup> consisting of carnal things, drew to it such a ministry as consisted of carnal respects, dignity, precedence, and the like. And such a ministry established in the gospel, as is founded upon the points and terms of superiority and nests itself in worldly honors, will draw to it, and we see it doth, such a religion as runs back again to the old pomp and glory of the flesh. For doubtless there is a certain attraction and magnetic force betwixt the religion and the ministerial form thereof. If the religion be pure, spiritual, simple, and lowly, as the gospel most truly is, such must the face of the ministry be. And in like manner, if the form of the ministry be grounded in the worldly degrees of authority, honor, temporal jurisdiction, we see it with our eyes it will turn the inward power and purity of the gospel into the outward carnality of the law, evaporating and exhaling the internal worship into empty conformities and gay shows. And what remains then but that we should run into as dangerous and deadly apostacy as our lamented neighbours the papists, who, by this very snare and pitfall of imitating the ceremonial law, fell into that irrecoverable superstition, as must needs make void the covenant of salvation to them that persist in this blindness?

#### CHAPTER IV.

*That it is impossible to make the Priesthood of Aaron a pattern whereon to ground Episcopacy.*

THAT which was promised next is to declare the impossibility of grounding evangetic government in the imitation of the Jewish priesthood; which will be done by considering both the

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<sup>42</sup> *The ministration of the law* was more influential in English ecclesiastical polity than appears from Milton's argument. Its prestige is illustrated by the analogy between the royal supremacy in the English church and the powers of "the godly kings . . . among the Jews and Christian emperors of the primitive church" which was drawn by the second of the Canons of 1603.

quality of the persons and the office itself. Aaron and his sons were the princes of their tribe, before they were sanctified to the priesthood:<sup>43</sup> that personal eminence which they held above the other Levites, they received not only from their office, but partly brought it into their office; and so from that time forward the priests were not chosen out of the whole number of the Levites, as our bishops, but were born inheritors of the dignity. Therefore, unless we shall choose our prelates only out of the nobility and let them run in a blood, there can be no possible imitation of lording over their brethren in regard of their persons altogether unlike. As for the office, which was a representation of Christ's own person more immediately in the high-priest, and of his whole priestly office in all the other, to the performance of which the Levites were but as servitors and deacons, it was necessary there should be a distinction of dignity between two functions of so great odds. But there being no such difference among our ministers, unless it be in reference to the deacons, it is impossible to found a prelacy upon the imitation of this priesthood. For wherein, or in what work, is the office of a prelate excellent above that of a pastor? In ordination, you'll say, but flatly against scripture, for there we know Timothy<sup>44</sup> received ordination by the hands of the presbytery, notwithstanding all the vain delusions that are used to evade that testimony and maintain an unwarrantable usurpation. But wherefore should ordination be a cause of setting up a superior degree in the church? Is not that whereby Christ became our Saviour a higher and greater work than that whereby he did ordain messengers to preach and publish him

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<sup>43</sup> The priestly office was assigned to Aaron and his sons forever (Ex. xxvii, 21).

<sup>44</sup> Milton was replying to interpretations of Timothy's ordination by "the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem" (Acts xvi, 4) such as the following in Bishop Bilson's *Perpetuall Governement of Christes Church* (p. 302): "And touching hands laid on Timothy by the Presbyterie, you answer your selves, for when you alleage that the Presbyterie did impose handes on Timothy, wee aske you whether all the Presbyterie had right and power to impose hands, or onely some of them? If all, then Laie Elders must either impose handes (which Calvine conclusively denieth [*Inst.* li. 4. ca. 3]) or be no part of the Presbyterie."



our Saviour? Every minister sustains the person of Christ in his highest work of communicating to us the mysteries of our salvation, and hath the power of binding and absolving; how should he need a higher dignity to represent or execute that which is an inferior work in Christ? Why should the performance of ordination, which is a lower office, exalt a prelate and not the seldom discharge of a higher and more noble office, which is preaching and administering, much rather depress him? Verily, neither the nature nor the example of ordination doth any way require an imparity between the ordainer and the ordained. For what more natural than every like to produce his like, man to beget man, fire to propagate fire? And in examples of highest opinion the ordainer is inferior to the ordained; for the pope is not made by the precedent pope, but by cardinals, who ordain and consecrate to a higher and greater office than their own.

## CHAPTER V.

### *To the Arguments of Bishop Andrews and the Primate.*

IT FOLLOWS here to attend to certain objections in a little treatise lately printed among others of like sort at Oxford, and in the title said to be out of the rude draughts of Bishop Andrews: and surely they be rude draughts indeed, insomuch that it is marvel to think what his friends meant, to let come abroad such shallow reasonings with the name of a man so much bruited for learning. In the twelfth and twenty-third pages he seems most notoriously inconstant to himself; for in the former place he tells us he forbears to take any argument of prelaty from Aaron, as being the type of Christ. In the latter he can forbear no longer, but repents him of his rash gratuity, affirming, that to say, Christ being come in the flesh, his figure in the high-priest ceaseth, is the shift of an anabaptist;<sup>45</sup> and

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<sup>45</sup> The Anabaptists denied the efficacy of infant baptism and the right of civil authorities to interfere in ecclesiastical affairs. The communism

stiffly argues that Christ being as well king as priest, was as well foreresembled by the kings then as by the high-priest. So that if his coming take away the one type, it must also the other. Marvellous piece of divinity! and well worth that the land should pay six thousand pound a year for in a bishopric, although I read of no sophister among the Greeks that was so dear, neither Hippias nor Protagoras,<sup>46</sup> nor any whom the Socratic school famously refuted without hire. Here we have the type of the king sewed to the tippet<sup>47</sup> of the bishop, subtly to cast a jealousy upon the crown, as if the right of kings, like Meleager in the *Metamorphosis*,<sup>48</sup> were no longer-lived than the firebrand of prelaty. But more likely the prelates fearing (for their own guilty carriage protests they do fear) that their fair days cannot long hold, practise, by possessing the king with this most false doctrine, to engage his power for them as in his own quarrel, that when they fall they may fall in a general ruin, just as cruel Tiberius<sup>49</sup> would wish,

When I die let the earth be rolled in flames.

But where, O Bishop, doth the purpose of the law set forth Christ to us as a king? That which never was intended in the law can never be abolished as part thereof. When the law was made, there was no king: if before the law, or under the law, God by a special type in any king would foresignify the future kingdom of Christ, which is not yet visibly come,

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of the early Anabaptists, who took part in the Peasants' Wars in Germany and were bloodily suppressed in Münster in 1535, was remembered, and they were regarded as dangerously subversive.

<sup>46</sup> In the prologue of Plato's *Hippias Major* the sophist is ironically rallied by Socrates on his big fees. Protagoras' financial aptitude figures in Plato's *Meno* 91D.

<sup>47</sup> *tippet*: scarf or cape cut to a formal pattern for a bishop's use.

<sup>48</sup> In *Metamorphoses* VIII, 425-525, Ovid tells the story of Althaea's careful preservation of the half-burnt brand on which the life of her infant son, Meleager, depended, and of her burning of the brand, years later, to avenge her brothers, Plexippus and Toxeus, whom he had killed in a moment of anger.

<sup>49</sup> Tiberius Claudius Nero, Emperor of Rome 14-37 A.D., was notorious for his maltreatment of writers who offended him. The verse quoted here is attributed to him by Dio Cassius in the *Roman History*, LXVIII, xxiii and by Suetonius in his *Life of Nero*, xxxviii.

what was that to the law? The whole ceremonial law, and types can be in no law else, comprehends nothing but the propitiatory office of Christ's priesthood, which being in substance accomplished, both law and priesthood fades away of itself and passes into air like a transitory vision, and the right of kings neither stands by any type nor falls. We acknowledge that the civil magistrate wears an authority of God's giving, and ought to be obeyed as his viceregent. But to make a king a type, we say is an abusive and unskilful speech, and of a moral solidity makes it seem a ceremonial shadow. Therefore your typical chain of king and priest must unlink. But is not the type of priest taken away by Christ's coming? "No," saith this famous protestant bishop of Winchester, "it is not, and he that saith it is, is an anabaptist." What think ye, readers? Do ye not understand him. What can be gathered hence, but that the prelate would still sacrifice? Conceive him, readers, he would missificate.<sup>50</sup> Their altars, indeed, were in a fair forwardness, and by such arguments as these they were setting up the molten calf of their mass again, and of their great hierarch the pope. For if the type of priest be not taken away, then neither of the high-priest, it were a strange beheading; and high-priest more than one there cannot be, and that one can be no less than a pope. And this doubtless was the bent of his career, though never so covertly. Yea, but there was something else in the high-priest besides the figure, as is plain by St. Paul's acknowledging him. 'Tis true that in the seventeenth of Deuteronomy,<sup>51</sup> whence this authority arises to the priest in matters too hard for the secular judges, as must

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<sup>50</sup> *missificate*: celebrate mass, which, in most communions, is regarded as a sacrifice. Archbishop Laud's regulation of the table in the chancel of English churches was resented by the Puritans as an attempt to make it approximate the altar of Roman Catholic churches.

<sup>51</sup> In Deuteronomy xvii, 8-13, the Hebrews are commanded, when personal quarrels become serious, to go to the priests or Levites for a "sentence of judgment." Exodus viii, 30, directed Aaron to wear Urim and Thummim, mysterious stones of judgment, in his breastplate as high priest; and in Deuteronomy xxxiii, 8, Urim and Thummim are mentioned as a charge of the tribe of Levi. When St. Paul was tried before the high priest, Ananias, he recognized him as "the ruler" of his people (Acts

needs be many in the occasions of those times involved so with ceremonial niceties, no wonder though it be commanded to inquire at the mouth of the priests, who besides the magistrates, their colleagues, had the oracle of urim to consult with. And whether the high-priest Ananias had not encroached beyond the limits of his priestly authority, or whether used it rightly, was no time then for St. Paul to contest about. But if this instance be able to assert any right of jurisdiction to the clergy, it must impart it in common to all ministers, since it were a great folly to seek for counsel in a hard intricate scruple from a dunce prelate, when there might be found a speedier solution from a grave and learned minister whom God hath gifted with the judgment of urim more amply oftentimes than all the prelates together; and now in the gospel hath granted the privilege of this oraculous ephod<sup>52</sup> alike to all his ministers. The reason, therefore, of imparity<sup>53</sup> in the priests, being now, as is aforesaid, really annulled both in their person and in their representative office, what right of jurisdiction soever can be from this place Levitically<sup>54</sup> bequeathed, must descend upon the ministers of the gospel equally, as it finds them in all other points equal. Well, then, he is finally content to let Aaron go. Eleazar<sup>55</sup> will serve his turn, as being a superior of superiors, and yet no type of Christ in Aaron's lifetime. O thou that wouldest wind into any figment or phantasm to save thy mitre! Yet all this will not fadge,<sup>56</sup> though it be

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xxiii, 5). Evidently the prelates stressed this passage, for in *The Nature of Episcopacy* (p. 9) Lord Brooke protested against such a precedent.

<sup>52</sup> The *ephod* and its "curious girdle" are described in Leviticus viii, 7, together with the breastplate of the high priest, which bore the Urim and Thummim.

<sup>53</sup> *imparity*: inequality. Cf. Introduction #28.

<sup>54</sup> *Levitically*: by the authority of the laws governing the Levites and priests in the book of Leviticus.

<sup>55</sup> When Aaron was ready to die, Moses was commanded to "strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son" (Num. xx, 26), who thereafter played a leading part as high priest in the migration of the Hebrews into Palestine. As the expected successor to the high priesthood, although he was not the oldest of Aaron's sons, Eleazar had been the superior of his brothers, all of whom were principal priests.

<sup>56</sup> *fadge*: fit or serve the purpose of the argument.

cunningly interpolished by some second hand with crooks and emendations: hear then, the type of Christ in some one particular, as of entering yearly into the holy of holies, and such-like, rested upon the high-priest only as more immediately personating our Saviour: but to resemble his whole satisfactory office<sup>57</sup> all the lineage of Aaron was no more than sufficient. And all or any of the priests, considered separately without relation to the highest, are but as a lifeless trunk and signify nothing. And this shows the excellence of Christ's sacrifice, who at once and in one person fulfilled that which many hundreds of priests many times repeating had enough to fore-show. What other imparity there was among themselves, we may safely suppose it depended on the dignity of their birth and family together with the circumstances of a carnal service, which might afford many priorities. And this I take to be the sum of what the bishop hath laid together to make plea for prelaty by imitation of the law: though indeed, if it may stand, it will infer popedom all as well. Many other courses he tries, enforcing himself with much ostentation of endless genealogies, as if he were the man that St. Paul fore-warns us of in Timothy,<sup>58</sup> but so unvigorously that I do not fear his winning of many to his cause, but such as doting upon great names are either over-weak or over-sudden of faith. I shall not refuse, therefore, to learn so much prudence as I find in the Roman soldier that attended the cross, not to stand breaking of legs when the breath is quite out of the body, but pass to that which follows. The Primate of Armagh,<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Christ's *satisfactory office* is his work of making satisfaction or amends to God by his sacrificial death for the sins of men. Of that, Milton says, all the sacrifices ever offered by Jewish priests were hardly a sufficient anti-type or symbol.

<sup>58</sup> In I Timothy i, 4, Paul warns Timothy not to "give heed to fables and endless genealogies." Milton applies the verse to the catalogues of bishops in the principal sees of the early church which Bishop Andrewes cited to justify episcopacy as an institution.

<sup>59</sup> *Armagh* was the see of Archbishop Ussher. Its claims to the primacy over Dublin were recognized by Wentworth after Ussher became archbishop. He was one of the most learned men in England, and was one of the most influential of the liberal bishops, never losing the respect of



at the beginning of his tractate, seeks to avail himself of that place in the sixty-sixth of Isaiah,<sup>60</sup> "I will take of them for priests and Levites, saith the Lord," to uphold hereby such a form of superiority among the ministers of the gospel, succeeding those in the law, as the Lord's-day did the sabbath. But certain if this method may be admitted of interpreting those prophetical passages concerning Christian times in a punctual correspondence, it may with equal probability be urged upon us that we are bound to observe some monthly solemnity answerable to the new moons, as well as the Lord's day which we keep in lieu of the sabbath: for in the twenty-third verse the prophet joins them in the same manner together, as before he did the priests and Levites, thus; "And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." Undoubtedly with as good consequence may it be alleged from hence that we are to solemnize some religious monthly meeting different from the sabbath, as from the other any distinct formality of ecclesiastical orders may be inferred. This rather will appear to be the lawful and unconstrained sense of the text, that God, in taking of them for priests and Levites, will not esteem them unworthy, though Gentiles, to undergo any function in the church, but will make of them a full and perfect ministry, as was that of the priests and Levites in their kind. And Bishop Andrews himself, to end the controversy, sends us a candid exposition of this quoted verse from the twenty-fourth page of his said book, plainly deciding that God, by those legal names there of priests and Levites, means our presbyters and deacons; for which either ingenuous confession or slip of his pen we give him thanks, and withal to him that brought these treatises into one volume, who, setting the contradictions of two learned men so

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Parliament, which invited him to sit with the Westminster Assembly in 1647, nor of Cromwell, to whom he pleaded with some success for the ejected Anglican clergy in 1656. For his tract in *Seven Briefe Treatises* cf. Introduction #26.

<sup>60</sup> The reference is to Isaiah lx, 21.

near together, did not foresee. What other deducements or analogies are cited out of St. Paul to prove a likeness between the ministers of the Old and New Testament, having tried their sinews, I judge they may pass without harm doing to our cause. We may remember then, that prelaty neither hath nor can have foundation in the law, nor yet in the gospel; which assertion, as being for the plainness thereof a matter of eyesight rather than of disquisition, I voluntarily omit; not forgetting to specify this note again, that the earnest desire which the prelates have to build their hierarchy upon the sandy bottom of the law, gives us to see abundantly the little assurance which they find to rear up their high roofs by the authority of the gospel, repulsed as it were from the writings of the apostles and driven to take sanctuary among the Jews. Hence that open confession of the primate before mentioned: "Episcopacy is fetched partly from the pattern of the Old Testament, and partly from the New as an imitation of the Old;" though nothing can be more rotten in divinity than such a position as this, and is all one as to say, "Episcopacy is partly of divine institution, and partly of man's own carving." For who gave the authority to fetch more from the pattern of the law than what the apostles had already fetched, if they fetched anything at all, as hath been proved they did not? So was Jeroboam's episcopacy<sup>61</sup> partly from the pattern of the law and partly from the pattern of his own carnality; a parti-colored and a parti-membered episcopacy, and what can this be less than a monstrous? Others therefore among the prelates, perhaps not so well able to brook or rather to justify this foul relapsing to the old law, have condescended at last to a plain confessing that both the names and offices of bishops and presbyters at first were the same, and in the scriptures nowhere distinguished. This grants the Remonstrant<sup>62</sup> in the fifth section of his *Defence*

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<sup>61</sup> Jeroboam's *episcopacy* is an allusion to King Jeroboam's abuse of his power to withdraw the ten northern tribes of Israel from worship in the temple at Jerusalem. He set up "calves of gold" at Dan and Bethel, and "made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi." (I Kings xii, 27-31.)

<sup>62</sup> The Remonstrant is Bishop Hall. Cf. Introduction #17 and 19.

and in the preface to his last short *Answer*. But what need respect be had whether he grant it or grant it not, whenas through all antiquity and even in the loftiest times of prelacy, we find it granted? Jerome,<sup>63</sup> the learnedest of the fathers, hides not his opinion that custom only, which the proverb calls a tyrant, was the maker of prelacy; before his audacious workmanship the churches were ruled in common by the presbyters; and such a certain truth this was esteemed that it became a decree among the papal canons compiled by Gratian.<sup>64</sup> Anselm also of Canterbury, who to uphold the points of his prelaticism made himself a traitor to his country, yet, commenting the epistles to Titus and the Philippians,<sup>65</sup> acknowledges from the clearness of the text what Jerome and the church rubric hath before acknowledged. He little dreamed then that the weeding-hook of reformation would after two ages pluck up his glorious poppy<sup>66</sup> from insulting over the good corn. Though since, some of our British prelates, seeing themselves pressed to produce scripture, try all their cunning,

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<sup>63</sup> For the significance of this reference to St. Jerome cf. Introduction #25.

<sup>64</sup> The reference is to Gratian's *Decretum*, Pars I, Distinctio XCV, caput v, where it is plainly stated that a presbyter is the same as a bishop, and that it is solely by virtue of custom that bishops take precedence of priests. The *Decretum*, which was compiled about 1150 A.D., was acknowledged to be the greatest medieval codification of Canon Law. Milton took pleasure in citing Gratian here because the Puritans regarded him as "one of the Pope's favorites" (to use William Vaughan's phrase in *The Golden Fleece*, p. 90), but the citation is hardly fair, for Gratian fully sustains episcopacy, although (as Calvin points out, *Institutes* IV, iv, 13) he recognized that under the Roman Empire the clergy shared the right to elect bishops with the emperors and nobles and, under proper safeguards, with the people.

<sup>65</sup> No commentary on Titus or Philippians by St. Anselm of Canterbury (cf. Introduction #21) is known. Dom Anselm Strittmatter suggests that Milton refers here to the *Commentary* of Herveus Burgidolensis (1080-1150?), which was published as by Anselm of Canterbury at Cologne in 1533 and 1612, at Paris in 1533 and 1549, and at Venice in 1547. In his commentary on Titus, Herveus says that "a bishop and a presbyter are the same," and in general his discussion confirms the passage of Jerome to which Milton refers. Cf. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus* (Series Secunda) CLXXXI, p. 1481.

<sup>66</sup> The *poppy . . . insulting over the good corn* is an allusion to the parable of the tares and the wheat (Matt. xiii, 24-30).

if the New Testament will not help them, to frame of their own heads, as it were with wax, a kind of mimic bishop limned out to the life of a dead priesthood. Or else they would strain us out a certain figurative prelate by wringing the collective allegory of those seven angels<sup>67</sup> into seven single rochets.<sup>68</sup> Howsoever, since it thus appears that custom was the creator of prelacy, being less ancient than the government of presbyters, it is an extreme folly to give them the hearing that tell us of bishops through so many ages: and if against their tedious muster of citations, sees, and successions, it be replied that wagers and church antiquities, such as are repugnant to the plain dictate of scripture, are both alike the arguments of fools, they have their answer. We rather are to cite all those ages to an arraignment before the word of God, wherefore, and what pretending, how presuming they durst alter that divine institution of presbyters, which the apostles, who were no various and inconstant men, surely had set up in the churches; and why they choose to live by custom and catalogue, or, as St. Paul saith, by sight and visibility, rather than by faith?<sup>69</sup> But first I conclude from their own mouths that God's command in scripture, which doubtless ought to be the first and greatest reason of church government, is wanting to prelacy. And certainly we have plenteous warrant in the doctrine of Christ to determine that the want of this reason is of itself sufficient to confute all other pretences that may be brought in favor of it.

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<sup>67</sup> For *those seven angels* cf. Introduction #27.

<sup>68</sup> *rochets*: "a close-fitting linen vestment resembling the surplice, but having close sleeves reaching to the hands, worn especially by bishops and abbots." (Webster.)

<sup>69</sup> "For we walk by faith, and not by sight" (II Cor. v, 7).

## CHAPTER VI.

*That Prelaty was not set up for Prevention of Schism, as is pretended, or if it were, that it performs not what it was first set up for, but quite the contrary.*

YET because it hath the outside of a specious reason, and specious things we know are aptest to work with human lightness and frailty, even against the solidest truth that sounds not plausibly, let us think it worth the examining for the love of infirmer Christians, of what importance this their second reason may be. Tradition they say hath taught them that, for the prevention of growing schism, the bishop was heaved above the presbyter. And must tradition then ever thus to the world's end be the perpetual cankerworm to eat out God's commandments? Are his decrees so inconsiderate and so fickle that when the statutes of Solon or Lycurgus<sup>70</sup> shall prove durably good to many ages, his in forty years shall be found defective, ill-contrived, and for needful causes to be altered? Our Saviour and his apostles did not only foresee, but foretell and forewarn us to look for schism. Is it a thing to be imagined of God's wisdom, or at least of apostolic prudence, to set up such a government in the tenderness of the church as should incline, or not be more able than any other to oppose itself to schism? It was well known what a bold lurker schism was even in the household of Christ, between his own disciples and those of John the Baptist, about fasting;<sup>71</sup> and early in the Acts of the Apostles the noise of schism had almost drowned the proclaiming of the gospel; yet we read not in scripture that any thought was had of making prelates, no, not in those places where dissension was most rife. If prelaty had been

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<sup>70</sup> For Solon and Lycurgus cf. Introduction #12, *Of Education*, footnote 73, and note 16 above.

<sup>71</sup> In Matthew ix, 14-15, Christ justifies his disciples for not fasting when the disciples of John raise that question. The protests of the Jewish Christians against Peter's mission to the gentiles (Acts xi, 2-4) led to his account of the vision of the sheet full of unclean beasts let down from heaven, to which Milton refers in Book II, iii, below.



then esteemed a remedy against schism, where was it more needful than in that great variance among the Corinthians which St. Paul<sup>72</sup> so labored to reconcile? And whose eye could have found the fittest remedy sooner than his? And what could have made the remedy more available, than to have used it speedily? And, lastly, what could have been more necessary than to have written it for our instruction? Yet we see he neither commended it to us nor used it himself. For the same division remaining there, or else bursting forth again more than twenty years after St. Paul's death, we find in Clement's epistle,<sup>73</sup> of venerable authority, written to the yet factious Corinthians, that they were still governed by presbyters. And the same of other churches out of Hermas,<sup>74</sup> and divers other the scholars of the apostles, by the late industry of the learned Salmasius appears.<sup>75</sup> Neither yet did this worthy Clement, St. Paul's disciple, though writing to them to lay aside schism, in the least word advise them to change the presbyterial government into prelacy. And therefore if God afterward gave or permitted this insurrection of episcopacy, it

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<sup>72</sup>In I Corinthians i, 11, Paul protests against the "contentions" in the Church in Corinth.

<sup>73</sup>Clement became Bishop of Rome ?92 A.D. and wrote his Epistle to the Corinthians ?96. He argued for an organization of the church on the general pattern of the Levitical temple worship, but he did use the terms *presbyter* and *bishop* without clear distinction. The authority of the epistle rested largely on its classic picture of order on land, sea, and in the starry heavens, and even in the legions of the empire, as a model for discipline in the Church.

<sup>74</sup>Herms, who was bishop at Rome ?140-50 A.D., is the supposed author of *The Book of the Visions*, better known as *The Shepherd*. In the principal vision of the Shepherd, or Angel of Repentance, the Church is described as a tower of exactly fitting stones, which represent the apostles, doctors, bishops, and other clergy. The spirit of the work is poetical and devotional to a degree comparable with that of *The Vision of Piers Plowman*.

<sup>75</sup>Salmasius, or Claude de Saumaise (1588-1658), the author of *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* (*The Cry of the Royal Blood*) to which Milton's *Defence of the English People* replied in 1651, began his career in 1608 with a scholarly work on the Papacy and in 1641 published the work to which Milton refers here, *De episcopis et presbyteris* (*On Bishops and Presbyters*) at Leyden. He was primarily a scholar, and his greatest work was *Pliniae exercitationes in Caii Julii Solini Polyhistoria*, 1629.

is to be feared he did it in his wrath, as he gave the Israelites a king. With so good a will doth he use to alter his own chosen government once established. For mark whether this rare device of man's brain thus preferred before the ordinance of God, had better success than fleshly wisdom not counselling with God is wont to have. So far was it from removing schism, that if schism parted the congregations before, now it rent and mangled, now it raged. Heresy begat heresy with a certain monstrous haste of pregnancy in her birth, at once born and bringing forth. Contentions before brotherly were now hostile. Men went to choose their bishop as they went to a pitched field, and the day of his election was like the sacking of a city, sometimes ended with the blood of thousands. Nor this among heretics only, but men of the same belief, yea confessors, and that with such odious ambition that Eusebius,<sup>76</sup> in his eighth book, testifies he abhorred to write. And the reason is not obscure, for the poor dignity or rather burden of a parochial presbyter could not engage any great party, nor that to any deadly feud: but prelaty was a power of that extent and sway, that if her election were popular, it was seldom not the cause of some faction or broil in the church. But if her dignity came by favor of some prince, she was from that time his creature and obnoxious<sup>77</sup> to comply with his ends in state, were they right or wrong. So that instead of finding prelaty an impeacher of schism or faction, the more I search, the more I grow into all persuasion to think rather that faction and she, as with a spousal ring, are wedded together, never to be divorced. But here let every one behold the just and dreadful judgment of God meeting with the audacious pride of man

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<sup>76</sup> The ecclesiastical historian Eusebius of Caesarea (Eusebius Pamphili, ?260–340 A.D.) devoted the eighth book of his *Ecclesiastical History* to the persecution of the Christians under the emperor Diocletian. The first chapter describes the previous decay of the Church, when factions armed themselves with “the armour of spite and sharpe speares of opprobrious wordes; so that Bishops against Bishops, and people against people, rayseed sedition.” (Meredith Hammer’s translation, London, 1585: p. 145.)

<sup>77</sup> *obnoxious*: under obligation.

that durst offer to mend the ordinances of heaven. God, out of the strife of men, brought forth by his apostles to the church that beneficent and ever-distributing office of deacons, the stewards and ministers of holy alms: man, out of the pretended care of peace and unity, being caught in the snare of his impious boldness to correct the will of Christ, brought forth to himself upon the church that irreconcilable schism of perdition and apostacy, the Roman antichrist; for that the exaltation of the pope arose out of the reason of prelacy, it cannot be denied. And as I noted before that the pattern of the high-priest pleaded for in the gospel, (for take away the head priest, the rest are but a carcase,) sets up with better reason a pope than an archbishop, for if prelacy must still rise and rise till it come to a primate, why should it stay there? Whenas the catholic government is not to follow the division of kingdoms, the temple best representing the universal church and the high-priest the universal head; so I observe here, that if to quiet schism there must be one head of prelacy in a land or monarchy, rising from a provincial to a national primacy, there may upon better grounds of repressing schism be set up one catholic head over the catholic church. For the peace and good of the church is not terminated in the schismless estate of one or two kingdoms, but should be provided for by the joint consultation of all reformed Christendom: that all controversy may end in the final pronounce or canon of one archprimate or protestant pope; although by this means, for aught I see, all the diameters of schism may as well meet and be knit up in the centre of one grand falsehood. Now let all impartial men arbitrate what goodly inference these two main reasons of the prelates have, that by a natural league of consequence make more for the pope than for themselves; yea, to say more home, are the very womb for a new subantichrist to breed in, if it be not rather the old force and power of the same man of sin counterfeiting protestant. It was not the prevention of schism, but it was schism itself, and the hateful thirst of lording in the church, that first bestowed a being upon prelacy; this was the true cause, but the pretence is still the same. The prelates,

as they would have it thought, are the only mauls<sup>78</sup> of schism.<sup>79</sup> Forsooth if they be put down, a deluge of innumerable sects will follow; we shall be all Brownists,<sup>80</sup> Familists,<sup>81</sup> Anabaptists.<sup>82</sup> For the word Puritan seems to be quashed, and all that heretofore were counted such, are now Brownists. And thus do they raise an evil report upon the expected reforming grace that God hath bid us hope for; like those faithless spies<sup>83</sup> whose carcasses shall perish in the wilderness of their own confused ignorance and never taste the good of reformation. Do they keep away schism? If to bring a numb and chill stupidity of soul, an unactive blindness of mind upon the people by their leaden doctrine, or no doctrine at all, if to persecute all knowing and zealous Christians by the violence of their courts be to keep away schism, they keep away schism indeed: and by this kind of discipline all Italy and Spain is as purely and politicly kept from schism as England hath been by them. With as good a plea might the dead-palsy boast to a man. "'Tis I that free you from stitches and pains, and the troublesome feeling of cold and heat, of wounds and

<sup>78</sup> *mauls*: heavy hammers for crushing or breaking purposes.

<sup>79</sup> The parallelism between Milton's charge that the bishops were the greatest schismatics in England and the similar charge in Lord Brooke's *A Discourse opening the Nature of that Episcopacie, Which is Exercised in Englande* is studied by Professor Whiting in *Milton's Literary Milieu*, pp. 302-10.

<sup>80</sup> The central doctrine of the followers of Robert Brown (1550?-1633?) was the independency of all congregations. The first permanently established Congregational Church in England seems to have been that founded by Henry Jacob in Southwark in 1616, which formally invited the adherence of "Brownists" everywhere. As Congregationalism and Independency spread, their enemies stressed their sectarian character by calling them "Brownisms."

<sup>81</sup> The *Familists* spread from Holland to England about 1575 and until the Civil Wars were constantly attacked for the supposed immorality of their belief in brotherly love as the first Christian virtue. The popular prejudice against them is represented by Thomas Middleton's *The Familie of Love* (1607) and by *A description of the sect called the Family of Love . . . discovered by one Mrs. Susanna Snow* (1641).

<sup>82</sup> *Anabaptists*: cf. note 45 above.

<sup>83</sup> The cowardice of the spies who were sent into Canaan by Moses (Num. xiii-xiv) and reported that the inhabitants of the land were too strong for the Israelites to attempt an invasion, was proverbial among the Puritan.



strokes: if I were gone, all these would molest you." The winter might as well vaunt itself against the spring, "I destroy all noisome and rank weeds, I keep down all pestilent vapours." Yes, and all wholesome herbs and all fresh dews, by your violent and hide-bound frost: but when the gentle west winds shall open the fruitful bosom of the earth, thus overgirded by your imprisonment, then the flowers put forth and spring, and then the sun shall scatter the mists, and the manuring hand of the tiller shall root up all that burdens the soil without thank to your bondage. But far worse than any frozen captivity is the bondage of prelates, for that other, if it keep down anything which is good within the earth, so doth it likewise that which is ill; but these let out freely the ill and keep down the good, or else keep down the lesser ill and let out the greatest. Be ashamed at last to tell the parliament ye curb schismatics, whenas they know ye cherish and side with papists and are now as it were one party with them, and 'tis said they help to petition for ye. Can we believe that your government strains in good earnest at the petty gnats<sup>84</sup> of schism, whenas we see it makes nothing to swallow the camel heresy of Rome, but that indeed your throats are of the right pharisaical strain? Where are those schismatics with whom the prelates hold such hot skirmish? Show us your acts, those glorious annals which your courts of loathed memory lately deceased have left us? Those schismatics I doubt me will be found the most of them such as whose only schism was to have spoke the truth against your high abominations and cruelties in the church; this is the schism ye hate most, the removal of your criminous hierarchy. A politic government of yours, and of a pleasant conceit, set up to remove those as a pretended schism, that would remove you as a palpable heresy in government. If the schism would pardon ye that, she might go jagged in as many cuts and slashes as she pleased for you. As for the rending of the church, we have many reasons to think it is not that which ye labor to prevent, so much as the rending of your pontifical

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<sup>84</sup> Christ called the Pharisees "blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." (Matt. xxiii, 24.)



sleeves: that schism would be the sorest schism to you; that would be Brownism and Anabaptism indeed. If we go down, say you, (as if Adrian's wall<sup>85</sup> were broke,) a flood of sects will rush in. What sects? What are their opinions? Give us the inventory. It will appear both by your former prosecutions and your present instances, that they are only such to speak of as are offended with your lawless government, your ceremonies, your liturgy, an extract of the mass-book translated. But that they should be contemners of public prayer and churches used without superstition, I trust God will manifest it ere long to be as false a slander as your former slanders against the Scots.<sup>86</sup> Noise it till ye be hoarse that a rabble of sects will come in; it will be answered ye, "No rabble, sir priest, but a unanimous multitude of good protestants will then join to the church, which now because of you stand separated. This will be the dreadful consequence of your removal. As for those terrible names of sectaries and schismatics which ye have got together, we know your manner of fight, when the quiver of your arguments, which is ever thin and weakly stored, after the first brunt is quite empty, your course is to betake ye to your other quiver of slander, wherein lies your best archery. And whom you could not move by sophistical arguing, them you think to confute by scandalous misnaming; thereby inciting the blinder sort of people to mislike and deride sound doctrine and good Christianity under two or three vile and hateful terms. But if we could easily endure and dissolve your doughtiest reasons in argument, we shall more easily bear the worst of your unreasonableness in calumny and false report: especially being foretold by Christ, that if he our master were by your predecessors called Samaritan and Beelzebub,<sup>87</sup> we must not think it strange if his best

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<sup>85</sup> In Book II of his *History of Britain* Milton describes Hadrian's Wall as made "with great stakes driv'n in deep, and fastn'd together, in manner of a strong mound, 80 mile in length, to divide what was *Roman* from *Barbarian*: . . . between *Solway Frith* and *Carlile*."

<sup>86</sup> The bishops' attacks on the Scots had ended after the Second Bishops' War. Cf. Introduction #16 and 17.

<sup>87</sup> "And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath

disciples in the reformation, as at first by those of your tribe they were called Lollards<sup>88</sup> and Hussites, so now by you be termed Puritans and Brownists." But my hope is that the people of England will not suffer themselves to be juggled thus out of their faith and religion by a mist of names cast before their eyes, but will search wisely by the scriptures and look quite through this fraudulent aspersion of a disgraceful name into the things themselves: knowing that the primitive Christians in their times were accounted such as are now called Familists and Adamites,<sup>89</sup> or worse. And many on the prelatic side, like the church of Sardis,<sup>90</sup> have a name to live and yet are dead; to be protestants, and are indeed papists in most of their principles. Thus persuaded, this your old fallacy we shall soon unmask and quickly apprehend how you prevent schism, and who are your schismatics. But what if ye prevent and hinder all good means of preventing schism? That way which the apostles used, was to call a council: from which, by anything that can be learned from the fifteenth of the Acts, no faithful Christian was debarred, to whom knowledge and piety might give entrance. Of such a council as this every parochial consistory<sup>91</sup> is a right homogeneous and constituting part, being in itself as it were a little synod, and towards a general assembly moving upon her own basis in an even and firm progression, as those smaller squares in battle

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Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils." (Mark iii, 22.)

<sup>88</sup> *Lollards* was the name given to the followers of the fourteenth century reformer, John Wycliff, possession of whose books was forbidden by a bull of Pope Alexander V in 1409. The spread of Wycliff's doctrines on the Continent owed much to the Bohemian, John Huss, who was burned in 1415.

<sup>89</sup> The Adamites were a branch of the Anabaptists who were at least popularly supposed to practice nudity.

<sup>90</sup> "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; . . . I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." (Rev. iii, 1. Cf. Introduction # 27.)

<sup>91</sup> *Consistory*: official assembly of the church. Presbyterian organization united the churches in small groups by parishes and culminated in synods representing large territories, known as provinces, with a general, national assembly, like the modern General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, at the top.

unite in one great cube, the main phalanx, an emblem of truth and steadfastness. Whereas on the other side, prelaty ascending by a gradual monarchy from bishop to archbishop, from thence to primate, and from thence, for there can be no reason yielded neither in nature nor in religion wherefore, if it have lawfully mounted thus high, it should not be a lordly ascendant in the horoscope of the church, from primate to patriarch, and so to pope: I say, prelaty thus ascending in a continual pyramid upon pretence to perfect the church's unity, if notwithstanding it be found most needful, yea, the utmost help to darn up the rents of schism by calling a council, what does it but teach us that prelaty is of no force to effect this work, which she boasts to be her masterpiece, and that her pyramid aspires and sharpens to ambition, not to perfection or unity? This we know, that as often as any great schism disparts the church and synods be proclaimed, the presbyters have as great right there and as free vote of old as the bishops, which the canon law conceals not. So that prelaty, if she will seek to close up divisions in the church, must be forced to dissolve and unmake her own pyramidal figure, which she affirms to be of such uniting power, whenas indeed it is the most dividing and schismatical form that geometricians know of, and must be fain to inglobe or incube herself among the presbyters; which she hating to do, sends her haughty prelates from all parts with their forked mitres, the badge of schism, or the stamp of his cloven foot whom they serve I think, who, according to their hierarchies acuminating still higher and higher in a cone of prelaty, instead of healing up the gashes of the church, as it happens in such pointed bodies meeting, fall to gore one another with their sharp spires for upper place and precedence, till the council itself prove the greatest schism of all. And thus they are so far from hindering dissension that they have made unprofitable, and even noisome, the chiefest remedy we have to keep Christendom at one, which is by councils: and these, if we rightly consider apostolic example, are nothing else but general presbyteries. This seemed so far from the apostles to think much of, as if

hereby their dignity were impaired, that, as we may gather by those epistles of Peter and John, which are likely to be latest written, when the church grew to a settling, like those heroic patricians of Rome<sup>92</sup> (if we may use such comparison) hasting to lay down their dictatorship, they rejoiced to call themselves and to be as fellow-elders among their brethren; knowing that their high office was but as the scaffolding of the church yet unbuilt, and would be but a troublesome disfigurement so soon as the building was finished. But the lofty minds of an age or two after, such was their small discerning, thought it a poor indignity that the high-reared government of the church should so on a sudden, as it seemed to them, squat into a presbytery. Next, or rather before councils, the timeliest prevention of schism is to preach the gospel abundantly and powerfully throughout all the land, to instruct the youth religiously, to endeavor how the scriptures may be easiest understood by all men; to all which the proceedings of these men have been on set purpose contrary. But how, O prelates, should you remove schism, and how should you not remove and oppose all the means of removing schism? When prelaty is a schism itself from the most reformed and most flourishing of our neighbour churches abroad and a sad subject of discord and offence to the whole nation at home. The remedy which you allege, is the very disease we groan under and never can be to us a remedy but by removing itself. Your predecessors were believed to assume this pre-eminence above their brethren only that they might appease dissension. Now God and the church calls upon you for the same reason to lay it down, as being to thousands of good men offensive, burdensome, intolerable. Surrender that pledge which, unless you foully usurped it, the church gave you and now claims it again for the reason she first lent it. Discharge the trust committed to you, prevent schism; and that ye can never do,

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<sup>92</sup> Milton thought of Romans like L. Quintius Cincinnatus, who was called from the plough to be dictator in 458 B.C., and in sixteen days saved an army which had been trapped by the Aequians, resigned his power, and went back to his farm.



but by discharging yourselves. That government which ye hold, we confess, prevents much, hinders much, removes much: but what? the schisms and grievances of the church? no, but all the peace and unity, all the welfare not of the church alone, but of the whole kingdom. And if it be still permitted ye to hold, will cause the most sad, I know not whether separation be enough to say, but such a wide gulf of distraction in this land as will never close her dismal gap until ye be forced (for of yourselves you will never do as that Roman Curtius<sup>93</sup> nobly did) for the church's peace and your country's to leap into the midst and be no more seen. By this we shall know whether yours be that ancient prelaty, which you say was first constituted for the reducement of quiet and unanimity into the church, for then you will not delay to prefer that above your own preferment. If otherwise, we must be confident that your prelaty is nothing else but your ambition, an insolent preferring of yourselves above your brethren; and all your learned scraping in antiquity, even to disturb the bones of old Aaron and his sons in their graves, is but to maintain and set upon our necks a stately and severe dignity, which you call sacred, and is nothing in very deed but a grave and reverend gluttony, a sanctimonious avarice; in comparison of which, all the duties and dearnesses which ye owe to God or to his church, to law, custom, or nature, ye have resolved to set at nought. I could put you in mind what counsel Clement, a fellow-laborer with the apostles, gave to the presbyters of Corinth, whom the people, though unjustly, sought to remove. "Who among you," saith he, "is noble-minded, who is pitiful, who is charitable, let him say thus, 'If for me this sedition, this enmity, these differences be, I willingly depart, I go my ways; only let the flock of Christ be at peace with the presbyters that are set over it.' He that shall do

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<sup>93</sup> Mettius Curtius was supposed, when a chasm opened in the Roman forum in 362 B.C., which soothsayers said could be closed only by a sacrifice of the city's greatest treasure, to have offered himself, as a symbol of the courage which he said was Rome's greatest treasure, and to have caused the closing up of the abyss by riding into it on horseback and disappearing forever.



this," saith he, "shall get him great honor in the Lord, and all places will receive him."<sup>94</sup> This was Clement's counsel to good and holy men, that they should depart rather from their just office than by their stay to ravel out the seamless garment of concord in the church. But I have better counsel to give the prelates and far more acceptable to their ears; this advice in my opinion is fitter for them: Cling fast to your pontifical sees, bate not, quit yourselves like barons, stand to the utmost for your haughty courts and votes in parliament. Still tell us that you prevent schism, though schism and combustion be the very issue of your bodies, your first-born; and set your country a bleeding in a prelatical mutiny to fight for your pomp, and that ill-favored weed of temporal honor, that sits dishonorably upon your laic shoulders, that ye may be fat and fleshy, swoln with high thoughts and big with mischievous designs, when God comes to visit upon you all this fourscore years vexation of his church under your Egyptian tyranny. For certainly of all those blessed souls which you have persecuted and those miserable ones which you have lost, the just vengeance does not sleep.

## CHAPTER VII.

*That those many Sects and Schisms by some supposed to be among us, and that rebellion in Ireland, ought not to be a hindrance, but a hastening of Reformation.*

As FOR those many sects and divisions rumored abroad to be amongst us, it is not hard to perceive that they are partly the mere fictions and false alarms of the prelates, thereby to cast amazements and panic terrors into the hearts of weaker Christians, that they should not venture to change the present deformity of the church for fear of I know not what worse inconveniencies. With the same objected fears and suspi-

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<sup>94</sup> A free translation of Clement's I *Corinthians*, xxii, 14-15. Cf. note 73 above.

cions, we know that subtle prelate Gardner<sup>95</sup> sought to divert the first reformation. It may suffice us to be taught by St. Paul, that there must be sects for the manifesting of those that are sound hearted. These are but winds and flaws to try the floating vessel of our faith, whether it be stanch and sail well, whether our ballast be just, our anchorage and cable strong. By this is seen who lives by faith and certain knowledge, and who by credulity and the prevailing opinion of the age; whose virtue is of an unchangeable grain, and whose of a slight wash. If God come to try our constancy, we ought not to shrink or stand the less firmly for that, but pass on with more steadfast resolution to establish the truth, though it were through a lane of sects and heresies on each side. Other things men do to the glory of God: but sects and errors, it seems, God suffers to be for the glory of good men, that the world may know and reverence their true fortitude and undaunted constancy in the truth. Let us not therefore make these things an incumbrance or an excuse of our delay in reforming, which God sends us as an incitement to proceed with more honor and alacrity. For if there were no opposition, where were the trial of an unfeigned goodness and magnanimity? Virtue that wavers is not virtue, but vice revolted from itself and after a while returning. The actions of just and pious men do not darken in their middle course, but Solomon tells us they are as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.<sup>96</sup> But if we shall suffer the trifling doubts and jealousies of future sects to overcloud the fair beginnings of purposed reformation, let us rather fear that another proverb of the same wise man be not upbraided to us, that "the way of the wicked is as darkness, they stumble at they know not what." If sects and schisms be turbulent in the unsettled estate of a church, while it lies under

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<sup>95</sup> Stephen Gardiner (1483?-1555), Bishop of Winchester, was an astute opponent of the reformers in the latter years of Henry VIII, and under Mary, as Lord Chancellor, he was active in securing the legislation under which a number of Protestants suffered.

<sup>96</sup> The words paraphrase Proverbs iv, 18. Immediately following in the text verse 19 is quoted.

the amending hand, it best beseems our Christian courage to think they are but as the throes and pangs that go before the birth of reformation, and that the work itself is now in doing. For if we look but on the nature of elemental and mixed things, we know they cannot suffer any change of one kind or quality into another without the struggle of contrarieties.<sup>97</sup> And in things artificial, seldom any elegance is wrought without a superfluous waste and refuse in the transaction. No marble statue can be politely carved, no fair edifice built, without almost as much rubbish and sweeping. Insomuch that even in the spiritual conflict of St. Paul's conversion,<sup>98</sup> there fell scales from his eyes, that were not perceived before. No wonder then in the reforming of a church, which is never brought to effect without the fierce encounter of truth and falsehood together, if, as it were the splinters and shares of so violent a jousting, there fall from between the shock many fond errors and fanatic opinions, which, when truth has the upper hand, and the reformation shall be perfected, will easily be rid out of the way or kept so low, as that they shall be only the exercise of our knowledge, not the disturbance or interruption of our faith. As for that which Barclay<sup>99</sup> in his *Image of Minds* writes concerning the horrible and barbarous conceits

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<sup>97</sup> Tradition made "The earth, the ayre, the water, and the fyre" mutually hostile to the point of conspiring

Each against other, by all meanes they may,  
Threatening their owne confusion and decay.

(Spenser, *Hymne in Honour of Love*, 78-82.)

<sup>98</sup> When, after St. Paul was struck blind on the road to Damascus, his conversion became complete, "scales as it were fell from his eyes." (Acts ix, 18.)

<sup>99</sup> John Barclay (1582-1621), a Gallicized Scot, author of *Argenis*, and a Catholic, satirized the Jesuits as severely as the English. He published his *Icon Animorum* in 1614. The book is a superficial survey of various national characteristics. In religion, it says, the English "run ever into extremes." They are divided by their pride "into divers sects and names; and have divers Lawes and rites established among them, neither by the authority of the men or the number of them, but onely by wilful obstinacy; and that which is most worthy of pity and laughter is this, that with cruell censure these sects doe persecute one another: holding that they onely are the children of God, and all other reprobates." (*The Mirrour of Mindes*, Englished by T. May, London, 1631, pp. 120-1.)

of Englishmen in their religion, I deem it spoken like what he was, a fugitive papist traducing the island whence he sprung. It may be more judiciously gathered from hence that the Englishman of many other nations is least atheistical and bears a natural disposition of much reverence and awe towards the Deity; but in his weakness and want of better instruction, which among us too frequently is neglected, especially by the meaner sort, turning the bent of his own wits, with a scrupulous and ceaseless care, what he might do to inform himself aright of God and his worship, he may fall not unlikely sometimes, as any other landman,<sup>100</sup> into an uncouth opinion. And verily if we look at his native towardliness in the roughcast without breeding, some nation or other may haply be better composed to a natural civility and right judgment than he. But if he get the benefit once of a wise and well-rectified nurture, which must first come in general from the godly vigilance of the church, I suppose that wherever mention is made of countries, manners, or men, the English people, among the first that shall be praised, may deserve to be accounted a right pious, right honest, and right hardy nation. But thus while some stand dallying and deferring to reform for fear of that which should mainly hasten them forward, lest schism and error should increase, we may now thank ourselves and our delays, if instead of schism a bloody and inhuman rebellion be struck in between our slow movings. Indeed against violent and powerful opposition there can be no just blame of a lingering dispatch. But this I urge against those that discourse it for a maxim, as if the swift opportunities of establishing or reforming religion were to attend upon the phlegm of state-business. In state many things at first are crude and hard to digest, which only time and deliberation can supple and concoct. But in religion, wherein is no immaturity, nothing out of season, it goes far otherwise. The door of grace turns upon smooth hinges, wide opening to send out, but soon shutting to recall the precious offers of mercy to a nation: which, unless Watchfulness and Zeal, two quicksighted

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<sup>100</sup> *other landman*: citizen of any other country.

and ready-handed virgins, be there in our behalf to receive, we lose: and still the oftener we lose, the straiter<sup>101</sup> the door opens, and the less is offered. This is all we get by demurring in God's service. 'Tis not rebellion that ought to be the hindrance of reformation, but it is the want of this which is the cause of that. The prelates which boast themselves the only bridlers of schism, God knows have been so cold and backward both there and with us to repress heresy and idolatry, that either through their carelessness or their craft, all this mischief is befallen. What can the Irish subject do less in God's just displeasure against us than revenge upon English bodies the little care that our prelates have had of their souls? Nor hath their negligence been new in that island, but ever notorious in Queen Elizabeth's days, as Camden,<sup>102</sup> their known friend, forbears not to complain. Yet so little are they touched with remorse of these their cruelties, for these cruelties are theirs, the bloody revenge of those souls which they have famished, that whenas against our brethren the Scots, who by their upright and loyal deeds have now bought themselves an honorable name to posterity, whatsoever malice by slander could invent, rage in hostility attempt, they greedily attempted; toward these murderous Irish, the enemies of God and mankind, a cursed offspring of their own connivance, no man takes notice but that they seem to be very calmly and indifferently affected. Where then should we begin to extinguish a rebellion that hath his cause from the misgovernment of the church? Where but at the church's reformation and the

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<sup>101</sup> *straiter*: the more narrowly.

<sup>102</sup> In his *Life of Milton* II, 310-4, Masson has a documented account of the suffering of the English in Ulster at this time. Current opinion blamed the revolt upon the failure of the Anglican authorities to convert the Irish, and agreed with Camden when he wrote: "So firmly doth this nation persevere in the old religion of their forefathers, which the careless negligence of their prelates and ignorance together, hath beyond al measure encreased, whenas there be none to instruct and teach them otherwise." *Britain, or A Chorographically Description of the kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Ilands adjoining out of the depth of Antiquitie*. Translated by Philemon Holland, London, 1610. Division of Scotland and Ireland, p. 82.



removal of that government which pursues and wars with all good Christians under the name of schismatics, but maintains and fosters all papists and idolaters as tolerable Christians? And if the sacred Bible may be our light, we are neither without example nor the witness of God himself, that the corrupted estate of the church is both the cause of tumult and civil wars, and that to stint them, the peace of the church must first be settled. "Now for a long season," saith Azariah to King Asa,<sup>103</sup> "Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: and in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city, for God did vex them with all adversity. Be ye strong therefore," saith he to the reformers of that age, "and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded." And in those prophets that lived in the times of reformation after the captivity, often doth God stir up the people to consider that, while establishment of church-matters was neglected and put off, there "was no peace to him that went out or came in; for I," saith God, "had set all men every one against his neighbour."<sup>104</sup> But from the very day forward that they went seriously and effectually about the welfare of the church, he tells them that they themselves might perceive the sudden change of things into a prosperous and peaceful condition. But it will here be said that the reformation is a long work, and the miseries of Ireland are urgent of a speedy redress. They be indeed; and how speedy we are, the poor afflicted remnant of our martyred countrymen that sit there on the seashore, counting the hours of our delay with their sighs and the minutes with their falling tears, perhaps with the distilling of their bloody wounds, if they have not quite by this time cast off and almost cursed the vain hope of our foundered ships and

<sup>103</sup> This prophecy (II Chron. xv, 3-7) was made when Asa was returning from the rout of "an host of a thousand thousand" Ethiopians. Asa responded by putting away "the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin."

<sup>1-4</sup> Zechariah viii, 10.

aids, can best judge how speedy we are to their relief. But let their succors be hasted, as all need and reason is, and let not therefore the reformation, which is the chiefest cause of success and victory, be still procrastinated. They of the captivity in their greatest extremities could find both counsel and hands enough at once to build and to expect the enemy's assault. And we, for our parts, a populous and mighty nation, must needs be fallen into a strange plight either of effeminacy or confusion, if Ireland, that was once the conquest of one single earl with his private forces and the small assistance of a petty Kernish prince,<sup>105</sup> should now take up all the wisdom and prowess of this potent monarchy to quell a barbarous crew of rebels, whom, if we take but the right course to subdue, that is beginning at the reformation of our church, their own horrid murders and rapes will so fight against them that the very sutlers<sup>106</sup> and horse-boys of the camp will be able to rout and chase them without the staining of any noble sword. To proceed by other method in this enterprise, be our captains and commanders never so expert, will be as great an error in the art of war as any novice in soldiership ever committed. And thus I leave it as a declared truth that neither the fear of sects, no nor rebellion, can be a fit plea to stay reformation, but rather to push it forward with all possible diligence and speed.

## THE SECOND BOOK.

How HAPPY were it for this frail and, as it may be truly called, mortal life of man, since all earthly things which have the name of good and convenient in our daily use, are withal so cumbersome and full of trouble, if knowledge, yet which is the best and lightest possession of the mind, were, as the common saying is, no burden, and that what it wanted

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<sup>105</sup> Richard FitzGilbert de Clare, Earl of Pembroke, known to the Irish as "Strongbow," landed at Waterford in 1170 to support Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leinster, and prepared for the subjugation of the greater part of the island in 1171 by Henry II.

<sup>106</sup> *sutlers*: traders following an army to serve it as a modern quartermaster's corps would do.

of being a load to any part of the body, it did not with a heavy advantage overlay upon the spirit! For not to speak of that knowledge that rests in the contemplation of natural causes and dimensions,<sup>107</sup> which must needs be a lower wisdom, as the object is low, certain it is that he who hath obtained in more than the scantest measure to know anything distinctly of God and of his true worship, and what is infallibly good and happy in the state of man's life, what in itself evil and miserable, though vulgarly not so esteemed—he that hath obtained to know this, the only high valuable wisdom indeed, remembering also that God even to a strictness requires the improvement of these his entrusted gifts,<sup>108</sup> cannot but sustain a sorer burden of mind, and more pressing, than any supportable toil or weight which the body can labor under, how and in what manner he shall dispose and employ those sums of knowledge and illumination which God hath sent him into this world to trade with. And that which aggravates the burden more is that (having received amongst his allotted parcels certain precious truths of such an orient<sup>109</sup> lustre as no diamond can equal, which nevertheless he has in charge to put off at any cheap rate, yea for nothing to them that will) the great merchants of this world, fearing that this course would soon discover and disgrace the false glitter of their deceitful wares wherewith they abuse the people, like poor Indians with beads and glasses, practise by all means how they may suppress the venting of such rarities, and such a

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. Bacon's distinction between knowledge of divine things and the knowledge produced by "the contemplation of God's creatures and works," which, "having regard to God," can give "no perfect knowledge, but wonder, which is broken knowledge." (*Advancement of Learning*, edited by R. F. Jones, 1937, p. 178.) Milton is least like Bacon in his confidence of his knowledge of God.

<sup>108</sup> The parable of the talents entrusted to good and negligent servants (Matt. xxv, 14-30) played a great part in Milton's inner life. Cf. Sonnet: *How soon hath Time*. . . .

<sup>109</sup> *orient*: supremely lustrous; applied to pearls because the best of them once came from the east. Milton thought of the parable (Matt. xiii, 45-6) of the "pearl of great price," to buy which a merchant "went and sold all that he had," and to which Christ compared the kingdom of heaven.

cheapness as would undo them, and turn their trash upon their hands. Therefore by gratifying the corrupt desires of men in fleshly doctrines, they stir them up to persecute with hatred and contempt all those that seek to bear themselves uprightly in this their spiritual factory:<sup>110</sup> which they foreseeing, though they cannot but testify of truth and the excellence of that heavenly traffic which they bring against what opposition or danger soever, yet needs must it sit heavily upon their spirits, that being, in God's prime intention and their own, selected heralds of peace and dispensers of treasure inestimable, without price, to them that have no pence, they find in the discharge of their commission that they are made the greatest variance and offense, a very sword and fire both in house and city over the whole earth. This is that which the sad prophet Jeremiah laments: "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me, a man of strife and contention!"<sup>111</sup> And although divine inspiration must certainly have been sweet to those ancient prophets, yet the irksomeness of that truth which they brought was so unpleasant to them that everywhere they call it a burden. Yea, that mysterious book of revelation<sup>112</sup> which the great evangelist was bid to eat, as it had been some eye-brightening electuary of knowledge and foresight, though it were sweet in his mouth and in the learning, it was bitter in his belly, bitter in the denouncing. Nor was this hid from the wise poet Sophocles,<sup>113</sup> who in that place of his tragedy where Tiresias is called to resolve king Œdipus in a matter which he knew would be grievous, brings him in be-

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<sup>110</sup> *factory*: trading post.

<sup>111</sup> Jeremiah xv, 10.

<sup>112</sup> In Revelation x, 9, the angel commands John to take the mysterious book that he carries and to "eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey." David Paracaus (1548-1622), the great Heidelberg theologian, in his *Commentary on Revelation*, interpreted this verse as teaching "the ministers of the word . . . earnestly to devour or eat up the doctrine of salvation divinely written and received from Christ, that is, diligently to read, understand, and meditate, & as it were to turne it into their verie moisture and blood."

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, 316-8. Tiresias unwillingly exposes Oedipus as the slayer of his father and husband of his mother.



moaning his lot, that he knew more than other men. For surely to every good and peaceable man it must in nature needs be a hateful thing to be the displeaser and molester of thousands; much better would it like him doubtless to be the messenger of gladness and contentment, which is his chief intended business to all mankind, but that they resist and oppose their own true happiness. But when God commands to take the trumpet and blow a dolorous or a jarring blast, it lies not in man's will what he shall say or what he shall conceal. If he shall think to be silent, as Jeremiah<sup>114</sup> did because of the reproach and derision he met with daily, "And all his familiar friends watched for his halting," to be revenged on him for speaking the truth, he would be forced to confess as he confessed: "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary with forbearing and could not stay." Which might teach these times not suddenly to condemn all things that are sharply spoken or vehemently written as proceeding out of stomach, virulence, and ill-nature; but to consider rather that if the prelates have leave to say the worst that can be said and do the worst that can be done, while they strive to keep to themselves, to their great pleasure and commodity, those things which they ought to render up, no man can be justly offended with him that shall endeavour to impart and bestow, without any gain to himself, those sharp but saving words which would be a terror and a torment in him to keep back. For me, I have determined to lay up as the best treasure and solace of a good old age, if God vouchsafe it me, the honest liberty of free speech from my youth, where I shall think it available in so dear a concernment as the church's good. For if I be, either by disposition or what other cause, too inquisitive or suspicious of myself and mine own doings, who can help it? But this I foresee, that should the church be brought under heavy oppression, and God have

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<sup>114</sup> In Jeremiah xx, 9-10, the prophet recalls that many of his acquaintances had doubted his perseverance in delivering his message, and that they had been convinced that God's word was in his heart like a fire in his bones.

given me ability the while to reason against that man that should be the author of so foul a deed, or should she, by blessing from above on the industry and courage of faithful men, change this her distracted estate into better days without the least furtherance or contribution of those few talents which God at that present had lent me, I foresee what stories I should hear within myself, all my life after, of discourage and reproach. "Timorous and ingrateful, the church of God is now again at the foot of her insulting enemies, and thou bewailest. What matters it for thee, or thy bewailing? When time was, thou couldst not find a syllable of all that thou hadst read or studied, to utter in her behalf. Yet ease and leisure was given thee for thy retired thoughts, out of the sweat of other men. Thou hadst the diligence, the parts, the language of a man, if a vain subject were to be adorned or beautified, but when the cause of God and his church was to be pleaded, for which purpose that tongue was given thee which thou hast, God listened if he could hear thy voice among his zealous servants, but thou wert dumb as a beast; from henceforward be that which thine own brutish silence hath made thee." Or else I should have heard on the other ear: "Slothful, and ever to be set light by, the church hath now overcome her late distresses after the unwearied labors of many her true servants that stood up in her defence; thou also wouldst take upon thee to share amongst them of their joy: but wherefore thou? Where canst thou show any word or deed of thine which might have hastened her peace? Whatever thou dost now talk or write, or look, is the alms of other men's active prudence and zeal. Dare not now to say or do anything better than thy former sloth and infancy,<sup>115</sup> or if thou darest, thou dost impudently to make a thrifty purchase of boldness to thyself out of the painful merits of other men; what before was thy sin is now thy duty, to be abject and worthless." These and suchlike lessons as these, I know would have been my matins duly and my even-song. But now by this little diligence, mark what a privilege I have

<sup>115</sup> *infancy*: speechlessness, the supposed primitive Latin meaning of the word, was probably in Milton's mind.

gained; with good men and saints to claim my right of lamenting the tribulations of the church, if she should suffer, when others that have ventured nothing for her sake, have not the honor to be admitted mourners. But if she lift up her drooping head and prosper, among those that have something more than wished her welfare, I have my charter and freehold of rejoicing to me and my heirs. Concerning therefore this wayward subject against prelaty, the touching whereof is so distasteful and disquietous to a number of men, as by what hath been said I may deserve of charitable readers to be credited, that neither envy nor gall hath entered me upon this controversy, but the enforcement of conscience only and a preventive fear lest the omitting of this duty should be against me, when I would store up to myself the good provision of peaceful hours; so lest it should be still imputed to me, as I have found it hath been, that some self-pleasing humor of vain-glory hath incited me to contest with men of high estimation, now while green years are upon my head; from this needless surmisaI I shall hope to dissuade the intelligent and equal<sup>116</sup> auditor, if I can but say successfully that which in this exigent behoves me; although I would be heard only, if it might be, by the elegant and learned reader, to whom principally for a while I shall beg leave I may address myself. To him it will be no new thing though I tell him that if I hunted after praise by the ostentation of wit and learning, I should not write thus out of mine own season when I have neither yet completed to my mind the full circle of my private studies,<sup>117</sup> although I complain not of any insufficiency to the matter in hand; or were I ready to my wishes, it were a folly to commit anything elaborately composed to the careless and interrupted listening of these tumultuous times. Next, if I were wise only to mine own ends, I would certainly take such a subject as of itself might catch applause, whereas this hath all the disadvantages on the contrary, and such a subject as the publishing whereof might be delayed at pleasure, and time enough to pencil it over with all the curious

<sup>116</sup> *equal*: impartial.

<sup>117</sup> *my private studies*: cf. Introduction #15.

touches of art, even to the perfection of a faultless picture; whenas in this argument the not deferring is of great moment to the good speeding, that if solidity have leisure to do her office, art cannot have much. Lastly, I should not choose this manner of writing, wherein knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may account it, but of my left hand. And though I shall be foolish in saying more to this purpose, yet, since it will be such a folly as wisest men going about to commit have only confessed and so committed, I may trust with more reason, because with more folly, to have courteous pardon. For although a poet, soaring in the high region of his fancies with his garland and singing robes about him, might without apology speak more of himself than I mean to do, yet for me sitting here below in the cool element of prose, a mortal thing among many readers of no empyreal conceit,<sup>118</sup> to venture and divulge unusual things of myself, I shall petition to the gentler sort, it may not be envy to me. I must say, therefore, that after I had from my first years by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father<sup>119</sup> (whom God recompense) been exercised to the tongues and some sciences, as my age would suffer, by sundry masters and teachers both at home and at the schools, it was found that whether aught was imposed me by them that had the overlooking, or betaken to of mine own choice in English or other tongue, prosing or versing, but chiefly this latter, the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live. But much latelier in the private academies of Italy, whither I was favored to resort—perceiving that some trifles which I had in memory, composed at under twenty or thereabout (for the manner is that every one must give some proof of his wit and reading there) met with acceptance above what was looked for, and other things which I had shifted in scarcity of books and con-

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<sup>118</sup> *empyreal conceit*: heavenly imagination. Cf. Milton's profession to have "drawn Empyreal Air" in *P.L.* VII, 14, when he has his singing robes on and is talking of himself.

<sup>119</sup> *my father*: cf. *To his Father*, ll. 77-92.



veniences to patch up amongst them, were received with written encomiums,<sup>120</sup> which the Italian is not forward to bestow on men of this side the Alps—I began thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labor and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life) joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die. These thoughts at once possessed me, and these other; that if I were certain to write as men buy leases,<sup>121</sup> for three lives and downward, there ought no regard be sooner had than to God's glory, by the honor and instruction of my country. For which cause, and not only for that I knew it would be hard to arrive at the second rank among the Latins, I applied myself to that resolution which Ariosto<sup>122</sup> followed against the persuasions of Bembo, to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adorning of my native tongue; not to make verbal curiosities the end, that were a toilsome vanity, but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother dialect. That what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old did for their country, I, in my proportion, with this over and above of being a Christian, might do for mine; not caring to be once named abroad, though perhaps I could attain to that, but content with these British islands as my world; whose fortune hath hitherto been that if the Athenians, as some say, made their small deeds great and renowned by their eloquent writers,

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<sup>120</sup> *written encomiums*: cf. *Paradise Regained*, *The Minor Poems*, and *Samson Agonistes*, pp. 4-13.

<sup>121</sup> *leases*: English leases were often for ninety-nine years.

<sup>122</sup> Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) was well known for his saying to Cardinal Bembo that he would "rather be one of the first Italian authors than barely a second among the Latins." The story is told in Giovambattista Pigna's short life of the poet, which was prefixed to most of the later editions of the *Orlando Furioso* (e. g., that of Venice, 1566). Pigna represents him as developing skill in Latin lyric verse in youth and later turning to his native language for motives like those which led Milton to a similar decision.

England hath had her noble achievements made small by the unskilful handling of monks and mechanics.<sup>123</sup>

Time serves not now, and perhaps I might seem too profuse to give any certain account of what the mind at home in the spacious circuits of her musing hath liberty to propose to herself, though of highest hope and hardest attempting; whether that epic form whereof the two poems of Homer and those other two of Virgil and Tasso<sup>124</sup> are a diffuse, and the book of Job<sup>125</sup> a brief, model: or whether the rules of Aristotle<sup>126</sup> herein are strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed, which in them that know art and use judgment, is no transgression but an enriching of art: and lastly, what king or knight before the conquest might be chosen in whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero.<sup>127</sup> And as Tasso<sup>128</sup> gave to a prince of Italy his choice whether he would command him to write of Godfrey's expedition against the Infidels, or Belisarius against the

<sup>123</sup> *monks and mechanics*: the monastic chroniclers of the Middle Ages, whose mechanically compiled records Milton may already have been examining critically for his projected *History of Britain*.

<sup>124</sup> Contemporary criticism laid great stress on the continuity of the epic tradition from Homer's *Iliad* through Virgil's *Aeneid* to the *Jerusalem Delivered* of Torquato Tasso (1544-95).

<sup>125</sup> This mention of the Book of Job as a short epic does not mean that Milton failed to recognize the dramatic elements which Martin Luther attributed to it in his *Table Talk* (*Tischreden* IV, 405-6).

<sup>126</sup> Critical discussion of the *Orlando Furioso* and of the much more regular *Jerusalem Delivered* had gone to extremes in Italy in praising and condemning them for both observing and disregarding the rules of art (as found in Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Art of Poetry* and their Renaissance interpreters).

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Milton's confession of his hope of writing a Christian epic on King Arthur in *Manso*, 80-4, and of his abandonment of such epic themes in *P. L.* IX, 25-41. Cf. also P. F. Jones, "Milton and the Epic Subject from British History," *P.M.L.A.* XLII (1927), pp. 901-9, and M. M. Ross, *Milton's Royalism*, pp. 54-6, for a survey of the political motives which led Milton to prefer a Saxon hero like Alfred at this time to Arthur.

<sup>128</sup> When Tasso planned the *Jerusalem Delivered*, he was a pensioner of the Cardinal Luigi d'Este at the court of his brother, Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara. Beside Godfrey of Boulogne's conquest of the Holy Land in the First Crusade, Tasso thought of two episodes in Italian history as possible subjects: the reconquest of the peninsula from the Ostrogoths in 538-40 by Belisarius, the great general of the Eastern Emperor Justinian, and Charlemagne's victory over the Lombards in northern Italy in 774.

Goths, or Charlemain against the Lombards; if to the instinct of nature and the emboldening of art aught may be trusted, and that there be nothing adverse in our climate<sup>129</sup> or the fate of this age, it haply would be no rashness, from an equal diligence and inclination, to present the like offer in our own ancient stories: or whether those dramatic constitutions, wherein Sophocles<sup>130</sup> and Euripides reign, shall be found more doctrinal and exemplary to a nation. The scripture also affords us a divine pastoral drama in the Song of Solomon,<sup>131</sup> consisting of two persons and a double chorus, as Origen rightly judges. And the Apocalypse of St. John is the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy,<sup>132</sup> shutting up and intermingling her

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<sup>129</sup> Milton's interest in the originally Aristotelian idea that the climate of northern Europe was unfavorable to the development of the highest intelligence may have been sharpened by its prominence in Jean Bodin's *Six Books of the Republic*, which he quotes in Chapter 3 below. Cf. *To Manso*, 28, and *P. L.* IX, 44-5, notes.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Milton's justification of a tragedy on the Greek model in his preface to *S. A.*

<sup>131</sup> This reference to the Song of Solomon is explained by the following passage from Paraeus' *Commentary on the Revelation*, which comes on p. 20 in Arnold's translation (1644), immediately before the remarks about the Apocalypse to which Milton next refers: "What Origen therefore wrote (in Prologo Cant. & Homil. I) touching the *Song of Songs*: that it seemed to him Solomon wrote a wedding song after the manner of a Drama: which, saith he, is a song of many Personages: . . . and he calleth that wedding Verse a Spirituall Interlude of foure Personages, which he saith the Lord revealed unto him in the same; viz. the Bridegroom and Bride: with the Bride her Virgins: with the Bridegroom his flock of Companions: The same thing I more truly may say touching the Revelation, that it seemes unto mee, the Lord Iesus revealed the same unto Iohn by his Angell, after the manner of a Drammaticall Representation."

<sup>132</sup> Paraeus then goes on to call Revelation "a Propheticall Drama, show, or representation. For as in human Tragedies, diverse persons one after another come upon the Theater to represent things done, and so again depart: diverse Chores also or Companies of Musicians and Harpers distinguish the diversity of the *Acts*, and while the *Actors* hold up, do with musically accord sweeten the wearinesse of the Spectators, and keepe them in attention: so verily the thing it selfe speaketh that in this Heavenly Interlude, by diverse *shewes* and *apparitions* are represented diverse, or rather . . . the same things touching the Church, not past, but to come, and that their diverse *Acts* are renewed by diverse *Chores* or Companies, one while of 24 *Elders* and *four Beasts*, another while of *Angels*, sometimes of *Sealed ones in their foreheads*, and sometimes of *Harpers, &c.*

solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies: and this my opinion the grave authority of Pareus, commenting that book, is sufficient to confirm. Or if occasion shall lead to imitate those magnificent odes and hymns wherein Pindarus and Callimachus<sup>133</sup> are in most things worthy, some others in their frame judicious, in their matter most an end faulty. But those frequent songs<sup>134</sup> throughout the law and prophets beyond all these, not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition, may be easily made appear over all the kinds of lyric poesy to be incomparable. These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God rarely bestowed, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every nation; and are of power beside the office of a pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his church, to sing the victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ, to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or

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with *new Songs*, and worthy *Hymmes*, not so much to lessen the wearisomenesse of the Spectators, as to infuse holy meditations into the mindes of the Readers, and to lift them up to Heavenly matters."

<sup>133</sup> Milton thought of the great *Odes* of Pindar (552?-472? B.C.) and of the *Hymns* of the Alexandrian poet Callimachus (310?-235 B.C.), of both of whom there are several reminiscences in his minor poems.

<sup>134</sup> In this superlative estimate of the Psalms Milton echoed the opinion of such a Protestant humanist as Sidney (in *An Apology for Poetry*). Even Peacham in his *Compleat Gentleman* (1634), pp. 79-80, asks, "What are the Psalmes of *David* . . . but a Divine Poeme, going sometime in one measure and sometime in another? What lively descriptions are there of the Majesty of God, the estate and security of Gods children, the miserable condition of the wicked? What lively similitudes and comparisons, as the righteous man to a bay tree, the Soule to a thirsty Hart, vnity to oyntment and the dew of Hermon? What excellent Allegories, as the vine planted in Ægypt?"



grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and refluxes of man's thoughts from within, all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness to paint out and describe. Teaching<sup>135</sup> over the whole book of sanctity and virtue through all the instances of example, with such delight to those especially of soft and delicious temper who will not so much as look upon truth herself, unless they see her elegantly dressed, that whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they would then appear to all men both easy and pleasant, though they were rugged and difficult indeed. And what a benefit this would be to our youth and gentry may be soon guessed by what we know of the corruption and bane which they suck in daily from the writings and interludes of libidinous and ignorant poetasters, who, having scarce ever heard of that which is the main consistence of a true poem, the choice of such persons as they ought to introduce, and what is moral and decent to each one, do for the most part lap up vicious principles in sweet pills to be swallowed down, and make the taste of virtuous documents harsh and sour. But because the spirit of man cannot demean itself lively in this body without some recreating intermission of labor and serious things, it were happy for the commonwealth if our magistrates, as in those famous governments of old, would take into their care, not only the deciding of our contentious law-cases and brawls, but the managing of our public sports and festival pastimes,<sup>136</sup> that they might be, not such as were

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<sup>135</sup> This is the most ardent statement in English of the Renaissance conception of the didactic value of poetry, which is defended in Sidney's *Apology*. Cf. Spenser's letter to Raleigh, prefixed to *The Faerie Queene*, explaining his intention to follow Homer and all the world's great epic poets who, in their heroes, have "ensampled a good governour and a vertuous man."

<sup>136</sup> Here again Milton has Plato's *Laws* in mind (cf. notes 1, 14, and 22 above) and their elaborate prescriptions about public festivals and education in traditional songs and dances in the seventh book. In contrast, he recalls the traditional encouragement of such recreation as "dancing, either men or women, . . . archery for men, leaping, running, vaulting,

authorized a while since, the provocations of drunkenness and lust, but such as may inure and harden our bodies by martial exercises to all warlike skill and performance, and may civilize, adorn, and make discreet our minds by the learned and affable meeting of frequent academies, and the procurement of wise and artful recitations sweetened with eloquent and graceful enticements to the love and practice of justice, temperance, and fortitude, instructing and bettering the nation at all opportunities, that the call of wisdom and virtue may be heard everywhere, as Solomon saith: "She crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, in the top of high places, in the chief concourse, and in the openings of the gates."<sup>137</sup> Whether this may not be, not only in pulpits, but after another persuasive method, at set and solemn panegyries,<sup>138</sup> in theatres, porches,<sup>139</sup> or what other place or way may win most upon the people to receive at once both recreation and instruction, let them in authority consult. The thing which I had to say, and those intentions which have lived within me ever since I could conceive myself anything worth to my country, I return to crave excuse that urgent reason hath plucked from me by an abortive and foredated discovery. And the accomplishment of them lies not but in a power above man's to promise; but that none hath by more studious ways endeavoured, and with more unwearied spirit that none shall, that I dare almost aver of myself as far as life and free leisure will extend; and that the land had once enfranchised herself from this impertinent yoke of prelacy, under whose inquisitorious and tyrannical duncery no free and splendid wit can flourish. Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader, that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the

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. . . May-games, Whitsun-ales, and Morrice-dances" by James I's Declaration of Sports (1618) and by Cavalier practice generally.

<sup>137</sup> Proverbs viii, 2-3.

<sup>138</sup> *panegyries*: religious festivals.

<sup>139</sup> *porches*: porticos or porches giving entrance to churches or public buildings. Sermons were often preached in such places to crowds in the streets.

heat of youth, or the vapours of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amourist, or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases:<sup>140</sup> to this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs, till which in some measure be compassed, at mine own peril and cost I refuse not to sustain this expectation from as many as are not loth to hazard so much credulity upon the best pledges that I can give them. Although it nothing content me to have disclosed thus much beforehand, but that I trust hereby to make it manifest with what small willingness I endure to interrupt the pursuit of no less hopes than these, and leave a calm and pleasing solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes, put from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies to come into the dim reflection of hollow antiquities sold by the seeming bulk, and there be fain to club quotations with men whose learning and belief lies in marginal stuffings, who, when they have like good sumpters<sup>141</sup> laid ye down their horse-load of citations and fathers at your door, with a rhapsody of who and who were bishops here or there, ye may take off their packsaddles, their day's work is done, and episcopacy, as they think, stoutly vindicated. Let any gentle apprehension that can distinguish learned pains from unlearned drudgery imagine what pleasure or profoundness can be in this, or what honor to deal against such adversaries. But were it the meanest under-service, if God by his secre-

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<sup>140</sup> The allusion is to the vision of "the Lord sitting upon a throne. . . . Above it stood the seraphim" in Isaiah vi, 1-2, but the conception of the nature of poetry recalls *P.L.* I, 6-23, and IX, 20-24, and *To his Father*, ll. 67-76. Cf. also Milton's development of the theme of the poet as a man whose life is a perfect poem in *Elegy VI*, 67-78.

<sup>141</sup> *sumpters*: pack animals.

tary conscience enjoin it, it were sad for me if I should draw back, for me especially, now when all men offer their aid to help ease and enlighten the difficult labors of the church, to whose service by the intentions of my parents and friends I was destined of a child, and in mine own resolutions: till coming to some maturity of years and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that would retch, he must either straight perjure or split his faith; I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing. Howsoever, thus church-outed<sup>142</sup> by the prelates, hence may appear the right I have to meddle in these matters, as before the necessity and constraint appeared.

## CHAPTER I.

*That Prelaty opposeth the reason and end of the Gospel three ways, and first, in her outward form.*

AFTER this digression it would remain that I should single out some other reason which might undertake for prelacy to be a fit and lawful church-government; but finding none of like validity with these that have already sped according to their fortune, I shall add one reason why it is not to be thought a church-government at all, but a church tyranny, and is at hostile terms with the end and reason of Christ's evangelic ministry. Albeit I must confess to be half in doubt whether I should bring it forth or no, it being so contrary to the eye of the world, and the world so potent in most men's hearts, that I shall endanger either not to be regarded or not to be understood. For who is there almost that measures wisdom by simplicity, strength by suffering, dignity by lowliness? Who is

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<sup>142</sup> For a discussion of the justice of Milton's claim to have been "church-outed by the prelates," cf. William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, Chap. viii.

there that counts it first to be last, something to be nothing, and reckons himself of great command in that he is a servant?<sup>143</sup> Yet God, when he meant to subdue the world and hell at once, part of that to salvation, and this wholly to perdition, made choice of no other weapons or auxiliaries than these, whether to save or to destroy. It had been a small mastery for him to have drawn out his legions into array and flanked them with his thunder; therefore he sent foolishness to confute wisdom, weakness to bind strength, despisedness to vanquish pride. And this is the great mystery of the gospel made good in Christ himself, who, as he testifies, came not to be ministered to, but to minister;<sup>144</sup> and must be fulfilled in all his ministers till his second coming. To go against these principles St. Paul so feared that if he should but affect the wisdom of words in his preaching, he thought it would be laid to his charge that he had made the cross of Christ to be of none effect.<sup>145</sup> Whether, then, prelaty do not make of none effect the cross of Christ by the principles it hath so contrary to these, nullifying the power and end of the gospel, it shall not want due proof, if it want not due belief. Neither shall I stand to trifle with one that will tell me of quiddities<sup>146</sup> and formalities, whether prelaty or prelatey in abstract notion be this or that; it suffices me that I find it in his skin, so I find it inseparable, or not oftener otherwise than a phoenix<sup>147</sup> hath been seen; although I persuade me that whatever faultiness was but superficial to prelaty at the beginning, is now by the just judgment of God long since branded and inworn into the

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<sup>143</sup> Milton is building on Christ's words to the apostles: "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and a servant of all" (Mark ix, 35). This verse figured constantly in anti-episcopal writing. Cf. Introduction #21.

<sup>144</sup> The sentence is woven out of reminiscences of I Corinthians i, *passim*; II Corinthians xii, 9; Matthew xx, 28; and Mark x, 45.

<sup>145</sup> I Corinthians i, 17.

<sup>146</sup> *quiddities*: abstract essences, philosophically defined. *Prelatey*—"the essential quality or essence of a prelate" (N. E. D.) is an example.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Milton's use of the phoenix, the "self-begotten bird" which lives, alone of its kind, for a millenium, in *Samson Agonistes*, 1699, and the note there.



very essence thereof. First, therefore, if to do the work of the gospel Christ our Lord took upon him the form of a servant,<sup>148</sup> how can his servant in this ministry take upon him the form of a lord? I know Bilson<sup>149</sup> hath deciphered us all the gallantries of *signore* and *monsignore* and *monsieur* as circumstantially as any punctualist of Castile, Naples, or Fountain Bleau could have done: but this must not so compliment us out of our right minds as to be to learn that the form of a servant was a mean, laborious, and vulgar life, aptest to teach; which form Christ thought fittest that he might bring about his will according to his own principles, choosing the meaner things of this world that he might put under the high. Now, whether the pompous garb, the lordly life, the wealth, the haughty distance of prelaty, be those meaner things of the world, whereby God in them would manage the mystery of his gospel, be it the verdict of common sense. For Christ saith, in St. John,<sup>150</sup> "The servant is not greater than his lord, nor he that is sent greater than he that sent him;" and adds, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."<sup>151</sup> Then let the prelates well advise, if they neither know nor do these things, or if they know and yet do them not, wherein their happiness consists. And thus is the gospel frustrated by the lordly form of prelaty.

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<sup>148</sup> Philippians ii, 7.

<sup>149</sup> For Thomas Bilson (1547-1616), Bishop of Winchester from 1597 until his death, cf. Introduction #26. The revival of interest in his *True Difference between Christian Subjection and Unchristian Rebellion* is said to have contributed to the decision to put Charles I to death. In resenting his defense of ecclesiastical titles as smacking more of the places of their origin—the Spanish, Italian and French courts at Castile, Naples, and Fontainebleau—Milton took a time-honored Puritan position to which Bilson had already replied in *The Perpetual Government of Christes Church*, chapter vi; "What Dominion and Titles Christ interdicted his Apostles." He argued that, though Christ forbade the Apostles lordship over one another, as slaves, he permitted it among them as brothers; and that, although he forbade the abuse of the title Rabbi, he permitted all innocent use of titles of respect, such as the Puritans themselves gave to their ministers.

<sup>150</sup> John xiii, 16, and xv, 20.

<sup>151</sup> John xviii, 17.

## CHAPTER II.

*That the ceremonious doctrine of Prelaty opposeth the reason and end of the Gospel.*

THAT which next declares the heavenly power and reveals the deep mystery of the gospel is the pure simplicity of doctrine, accounted the foolishness of this world, yet crossing and confounding the pride and wisdom of the flesh. And wherein consists this fleshly wisdom and pride? In being altogether ignorant of God and his worship? No, surely; for men are naturally ashamed of that. Where then? It consists in a bold presumption of ordering the worship and service of God after man's own will in traditions and ceremonies. Now if the pride and wisdom of the flesh were to be defeated and confounded, no doubt but in that very point wherein it was proudest and thought itself wisest, that so the victory of the gospel might be the more illustrious. But our prelates, instead of expressing the spiritual power of their ministry by warring against this chief bulwark and stronghold of the flesh, have entered into fast league with the principal enemy against whom they were sent, and turned the strength of fleshly pride and wisdom against the pure simplicity of saving truth. First, mistrusting to find the authority of their order in the immediate institution of Christ or his apostles by the clear evidence of scripture, they fly to the carnal supportment of tradition; when we appeal to the Bible, they to the unweildy volumes of tradition: and do not shame to reject the ordinance of him that is eternal for the perverse iniquity of sixteen hundred years; choosing rather to think truth itself a liar, than that sixteen ages should be taxed with an error; not considering the general apostacy that was foretold and the church's flight into the wilderness.<sup>152</sup> Nor is this enough; instead of showing

<sup>152</sup> In his *Commentary upon the Revelation* (p. 274) Paraeus had no hesitation in interpreting the prophecy in the twelfth chapter of the "woman clothed with the Sun" as representing the early Church. By her investment with wings in verse fourteen he said that the flight of true Christians into obscure retreats during the Dark and Middle Ages was meant. Cf. Introduction #22.

the reason of their lowly condition from divine example and command, they seek to prove their high pre-eminence from human consent and authority. But let them chant while they will of prerogatives, we shall tell them of scripture; of custom, we of scripture; of acts and statutes, still of scripture; till the quick and piercing word enter to the dividing of their souls,<sup>153</sup> and the mighty weakness of the gospel throw down the weak mightiness of man's reasoning. Now for their demeanor within the church, how have they disfigured and defaced that more than angelic brightness, the unclouded serenity of Christian religion, with the dark overcasting of superstitious copes and flaminical<sup>154</sup> vestures, wearing on their backs and, I abhor to think, perhaps in some worse place, the unexpressible image of God the Father! Tell me, ye priests, wherefore this gold, wherefore these robes and surplices over the gospel? Is our religion guilty of the first trespass and hath need of clothing to cover her nakedness? What does this else but cast an ignominy upon the perfection of Christ's ministry by seeking to adorn it with that which was the poor remedy of our shame? Believe it, wondrous doctors, all corporeal resemblances of inward holiness and beauty are now past; he that will clothe the gospel now, intimates plainly that the gospel is naked, uncomely, that I may not say reproachful. Do not, ye church maskers, while Christ is clothing upon our bareness with his righteous garment to make us acceptable in his Father's sight, do not, as ye do, cover and hide his righteous verity with the polluted clothing of your ceremonies to make it seem more decent in your own eyes. "How beautiful," saith Isaiah, "are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth salvation!"<sup>155</sup> Are the feet so beautiful, and is the very bringing of these tidings so decent of itself? What new decency

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<sup>153</sup> "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." Heb. iv, 12.

<sup>154</sup> The flamens were priests in ancient Roman paganism. Cf. *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, 194, and *Areopagitica*, note 47.

<sup>155</sup> Isaiah lii, 7.

then can be added to this by your spinstry?<sup>156</sup> Ye think by these gaudy glisterings to stir up the devotion of the rude multitude; ye think so, because ye forsake the heavenly teaching of St. Paul for the hellish sophistry of papism. If the multitude be rude, the lips of the preacher must give knowledge, and not ceremonies. And although some Christians be new-born babes<sup>157</sup> comparatively to some that are stronger, yet in respect of ceremony, which is but a rudiment of the law, the weakest Christian hath thrown off the robes of his minority and is a perfect man, as to legal rites. What children's food there is in the gospel we know to be no other than the "sincerity of the word, that they may grow thereby."<sup>158</sup> But is here the utmost of your outbraving the service of God? No. Ye have been bold not to set your threshold by his threshold<sup>159</sup> or your posts by his posts, but your sacrament, your sign, call it what you will, by his sacrament, baptizing the Christian infant with a solemn sprinkle, and unbaptizing for your own part with a profane and impious forefinger; as if, when ye had laid the purifying element upon his forehead, ye meant to cancel and cross it out again with a character not of God's bidding. O but the innocence of these ceremonies! O rather the sottish absurdity of this excuse! What could be more innocent than the washing of a cup,<sup>160</sup> a glass, or hands before meat, and that under the law when so many washings were commanded, and by long tradition? Yet our Saviour detested their customs though never so seeming harm-

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<sup>156</sup> *spinstry*: drapery, millinery.

<sup>157</sup> Milton adapts Paul's argument (Rom. ii, 20; I Cor. iii, 1-3; and Ephes. iv, 13-14) that Christians who had emerged from Judaism and had not abandoned their "bondage to the law" (*i. e.* the ceremonial law of Moses) were "babes" in the faith.

<sup>158</sup> "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (I Pet. ii, 2.)

<sup>159</sup> Speaking of the disrespect which the Israelites had shown to the Temple the prophet said (Ezek. xlv, 8): "In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, . . . they have even defiled my holy name."

<sup>160</sup> Christ condemned the ceremonial importance attached by the Pharisees to washing "the cup and the platter" (Matt. xxiii, 25) and to washing hands before eating (Mark vii, 4).

less, and charges them severely that they had transgressed the commandments of God by their traditions and worshipped him in vain. How much more then must these and much grosser ceremonies now in force, delude the end of Christ's coming in the flesh against the flesh, and stifle the sincerity of our new covenant which hath bound us to forsake all carnal pride and wisdom, especially in matters of religion. Thus we see again how prelaty, sailing in opposition to the main end and power of the gospel, doth not join in that mysterious work of Christ, by lowliness to confound height; by simplicity of doctrine the wisdom of the world; but contrariwise hath made itself high in the world and the flesh to vanquish things by the world accounted low, and made itself wise in tradition and fleshly ceremony to confound the purity of doctrine which is the wisdom of God.

### CHAPTER III.

*That Prelatical jurisdiction opposeth the reason and end of the Gospel and of State.*

THE THIRD and last consideration remains, whether the prelates in their function do work according to the gospel, practising to subdue the mighty things of this world by things weak, which St. Paul<sup>161</sup> hath set forth to be the power and excellence of the gospel, or whether in more likelihood they band themselves with the prevalent things of this world, to overrun the weak things which Christ hath made choice to work by: and this will soonest be discerned by the course of their jurisdiction. But here again I find my thoughts almost in suspense betwixt yea and no, and am nigh turning mine eye which way I may best retire and not proceed in this subject, blaming the ardency of my mind that fixed me too attentively to come thus far. For truth, I know not how, hath this unhappiness fatal to her, ere she can come to the trial and

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<sup>161</sup> Milton paraphrases Paul's words in I Corinthians i, 26-27.



inspection of the understanding; being to pass through many little wards and limits of the several affections and desires, she cannot shift it, but must put on such colors<sup>162</sup> and attire as those pathetic handmaids of the soul please to lead her in to their queen. And if she find so much favor with them, they let her pass in her own likeness; if not, they bring her into the presence habited and colored like a notorious falsehood. And contrary, when any falsehood comes that way, if they like the errand she brings, they are so artful to counterfeit the very shape and visage of truth that the understanding not being able to discern the fucus which these enchantresses with such cunning have laid upon the feature sometimes of truth, sometimes of falsehood interchangeably, sentences for the most part one for the other at the first blush, according to the subtle imposture of these sensual mistresses that keep the ports and passages between her and the object. So that were it not for leaving imperfect that which is already said, I should go near to relinquish that which is to follow. And because I see that most men—as it happens in this world, either weakly or falsely principled, what through ignorance and what through custom of license, both in discourse and writing, by what hath been of late written in vulgar—have not seemed to attain the decision of this point, I shall likewise assay those wily arbitresses who in most men have, as was heard, the sole ushering of truth and falsehood between the sense and the soul, with what loyalty they will use me in convoying this truth to my understanding; the rather for that, by as much acquaintance as I can obtain with them, I do not find them engaged either one way or other. Concerning therefore ecclesial jurisdiction I find still more controversy, who should administer it, than diligent inquiry made to learn what it is; for had the pains been taken to search

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<sup>162</sup> This figure, which owed its popularity in part to Bacon's use of it in his essay "Of Truth," was frequent in Puritan controversy. On the first page of his *A Counter-Snarle for Ishmael Rabshacheh* (1613), Sir Edward Hoby said: "You are not to learne what *Artificiall* shadowes *Heresie* hath in all ages contriued, for the couering of her vgly shape; neither are you vnable to discern the counterfeit colours wherewith she hath varnished her wrinkled deformities."

out that, it had been long ago enrolled to be nothing else but a pure tyrannical forgery of the prelates; and that jurisdictional power in the church there ought to be none at all. It cannot be conceived that what men now call jurisdiction in the church, should be other thing than a Christian censorship; and therefore is it most commonly and truly named ecclesiastical censure. Now if the Roman censor,<sup>163</sup> a civil function, to that severe assize<sup>164</sup> of surveying and controlling the privatest and slyest manners of all men and all degrees had no jurisdiction, no courts of plea or indictment, no punitive force annexed—whether it were that to this manner of correction the entanglement of suits was improper, or that the notice of those upright inquisitors extended to such the most covert and spirituous vices as would slip easily between the wider and more material grasp of law, or that it stood more with the majesty of that office to have no other sergeants or maces about them but those invisible ones of terror and shame, or lastly, were it their fear lest the greatness of this authority and honor, armed with jurisdiction, might step with ease into a tyranny—in all these respects, with much more reason undoubtedly ought the censure of the church be quite divested and disentailed of all jurisdiction whatsoever. For if the course of judicature to a political censorship seem either too tedious or too contentious, much more may it to the discipline of church, whose definitive decrees are to be speedy, but the execution of rigor slow, contrary to what in legal proceedings is most usual, and by how much the less contentious it is, by so much will it be the more Christian. And if the Censor, in his moral episcopacy<sup>165</sup> being to judge most in matters not answerable by writ or action, could not use an instrument so gross and bodily as jurisdiction is,

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<sup>163</sup> The Roman Censorship consisted in the scrutiny of public morals by two highly respected officials who were elected for a five-year term and had unlimited *moral* power in the exercise of their office. The institution lasted from 443 to 22 B.C., and its discontinuance was commonly regarded in Milton's time as a result of the decay of republican institutions in Rome. Cf. note 170 below.

<sup>164</sup> *assize*: court session.

<sup>165</sup> *episcopacy*: inspection.

how can the minister of gospel manage the corpulent and secular trial of bill and process in things merely spiritual? Or could that Roman office, without this juridical sword or saw, strike such a reverence of itself into the most undaunted hearts as with one single dash of ignominy to put all the senate and knighthood of Rome into a tremble, surely much rather might the heavenly ministry of the evangel bind herself about with far more piercing beams of majesty and awe, by wanting the beggarly help of halings and amercements<sup>166</sup> in the use of her powerful keys. For when the church without temporal support is able to do her great works upon the unforced obedience of men, it argues a divinity about her. But when she thinks to credit and better her spiritual efficacy and to win herself respect and dread by strutting in the false vizard of worldly authority, 'tis evident that God is not there, but that her apostolic virtue is departed from her and hath left her key-cold; which she perceiving as in a decayed nature seeks to the outward fomentations and chafings of worldly help and external flourishes to fetch, if it be possible, some motion into her extreme parts, or to hatch a counterfeit life with the crafty and artificial heat of jurisdiction. But it is observable that so long as the church, in true imitation of Christ, can be content to ride upon an ass,<sup>167</sup> carrying herself and her government along in a mean and simple guise, she may be, as he is, a lion of the tribe of Judah, and in her humility all men with loud hosannas will confess her greatness. But when, despising the mighty operation of the Spirit by the weak things of this world, she thinks to make herself bigger and more considerable by using the way of civil force and jurisdiction, as she sits upon this lion she changes into an ass, and instead of hosannas every man pelts her with stones and dirt. Lastly, if the wisdom of the Romans feared to commit jurisdiction to an office of so high

<sup>166</sup> *halings and amercements*: violently executed summonses to the ecclesiastical courts and penalties, usually fines, fixed at their discretion.

<sup>167</sup> Milton interprets the story of Christ's entry into Jerusalem riding on an ass (Luke xix, 35-8) in the light of the salutation of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah by the elders in Revelation v, 5. In identifying the lion with Christ, he was following Paraeus (*Commentary*, p. 99).

esteem and dread as was the censor's, we may see what a solecism in the art of policy it hath been all this while through Christendom to give jurisdiction to ecclesiastical censure. For that strength, joined with religion abused and pretended to ambitious ends, must of necessity breed the heaviest and most quelling tyranny, not only upon the necks, but even to the souls of men: which if Christian Rome had been so cautelous<sup>168</sup> to prevent in her church as pagan Rome was in her state, we had not had such a lamentable experience thereof as now we have from thence upon all Christendom. For although I said before that the church coveting to ride upon the lionly form of jurisdiction makes a transformation of herself into an ass and becomes despicable, that is to those whom God hath enlightened with true knowledge; but where they remain yet in the reliques of superstition, this is the extremity of their bondage and blindness, that while they think they do obeisance to the lordly vision of a lion, they do it to an ass, that through the just judgment of God is permitted to play the dragon among them because of their wilful stupidity. And let England here well rub her eyes lest by leaving jurisdiction and church censure to the same persons, now that God hath been so long medicining her eyesight, she do not with her over-politic fetches<sup>169</sup> mar all, and bring herself back again to worship this ass bestriding a lion. Having hitherto explained that to ecclesiastical censure no jurisdictional power can be added without a childish and dangerous oversight in polity and a pernicious contradiction in evangelic discipline, as anon more fully, it will be next to declare wherein the true reason and force of church censure consists, which by then it shall be laid open to the root, so little is it that I fear lest any crookedness, any wrinkle or spot should be found in presbyterial government, that if Bodin,<sup>170</sup> the famous French writer, though a

<sup>168</sup> *cautelous*: wary, watchful.

<sup>169</sup> *over-politic fetches*: tricks or devices which are likely to fail or cause trouble because they are too artful.

<sup>170</sup> In the *Republic* (1576) VI, i, p. 854, the great French publicist, Jean Bodin (1530-1596), expressed admiration for the control of public morals exercised by the "bishops, ministers, and elders" of the Church at



papist, yet affirms that the commonwealth which maintains this discipline will certainly flourish in virtue and piety, I dare assure myself that every true protestant will admire the integrity, the uprightness, the divine and gracious purposes thereof, and even for the reason of it so coherent with the doctrine of the gospel, besides the evidence of command in Scripture, will confess it to be the only true church government, and that, contrary to the whole end and mystery of Christ's coming in the flesh, a false appearance of the same is exercised by prelaty. But because some count is rigorous, and that hereby men shall be liable to a double punishment, I will begin somewhat higher and speak of punishment, which, as it is an evil, I esteem to be of two sorts or rather two degrees only, a reprobate conscience in this life, and hell in the other world. Whatever else men call punishment or censure is not properly an evil, so it be not an illegal violence, but a saving medicine ordained of God both for the public and private good of man, who consisting of two parts, the inward and the outward, was by the eternal Providence left under two sorts of cure, the church and the magistrate. The magistrate hath only to deal with the outward part, I mean not of the body alone, but of the mind in all her outward acts, which in scripture is called the outward man. So that it would be helpful to us if we might borrow such authority as the rhetoricians by patent may give us, with a kind of Promethean skill to shape and fashion this outward man into the similitude of a body<sup>171</sup> and set him visible before us; imagining the inner man only as the soul. Thus then the civil magistrate looking only upon the outward man, (I say as a magistrate, for what he doth further, he doth

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Geneva without any use of force either by their own authority or that of the state. Incidentally, like Milton, Bodin compared the Presbyterian censorship of morals with that in ancient Rome, in both cases approving the avoidance of fines and other penalties for offenders and the appeal of the censors to public opinion to control them. Cf. note 129 above.

<sup>171</sup> Milton was perhaps thinking of Propertius' variation (in *Elegies* III, v, 7-10) of the myth of the making of men by Prometheus. In forming them out of the physical features of various animals and giving them the passions of various creatures, Propertius says that Prometheus forgot to give them minds.

it as a member of the church), if he find in his complexion, skin, or outward temperature the signs and marks, or in his doings the effects of injustice, rapine, lust, cruelty, or the like, sometimes he shuts up as in phrenetic<sup>172</sup> or infectious diseases, or confines within doors, as in every sickly estate. Sometimes he shaves by penalty or mulct,<sup>173</sup> or else to cool and take down those luxuriant humors which wealth and excess have caused to abound. Otherwhiles he sears, he cauterizes, he scarifies, lets blood, and finally, for utmost remedy cuts off. The patients which most an end are brought into his hospital, are such as are far gone and beside themselves (unless they be falsely accused) so that force is necessary to tame and quiet them in their unruly fits, before they can be made capable of a more human cure. His general end is the outward peace and welfare of the commonwealth, and civil happiness in this life. His particular end in every man is, by the infliction of pain, damage, and disgrace, that the senses and common perceivance might carry this message to the soul within, that it is neither easeful, profitable, nor praiseworthy in this life to do evil. Which must needs tend to the good of man, whether he be to live or die; and be undoubtedly the first means to a natural man, especially an offender, which might open his eyes to a higher consideration of good and evil, as it is taught in religion. This is seen in the often penitence of those that suffer, who, had they escaped, had gone on sinning to an immeasurable heap, which is one of the extremest punishments. And this is all that the civil magistrate, as so being, confers to the healing of man's mind, working only by terrifying plasters upon the rind and orifice of the sore, and by all outward appliances, as the logicians say, *a posteriori*, at the effect, and not from the cause; not once touching the inward bed of corruption and that hectic disposition to evil, the source of all vice and obliquity against the rule of law. Which how insufficient it is to cure the soul of man, we cannot better guess than by the art of bodily physic. Therefore God to the intent of further healing

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<sup>172</sup> *phrenetic*: insanely excited.

<sup>173</sup> *mulct*: fine.

man's depraved mind, to this power of the magistrate, which contents itself with the restraint of evil-doing in the external man, added that which we call censure, to purge it and remove it clean out of the inmost soul. In the beginning this authority seems to have been placed, as all both civil and religious rites once were, only in each father of family,<sup>174</sup> afterwards, among the heathen, in the wise men and philosophers of the age; but so as it was a thing voluntary, and no set government. More distinctly among the Jews, as being God's peculiar, where the priests, Levites, prophets, and at last the scribes and pharisees took charge of instructing and overseeing the lives of the people. But in the gospel, which is the straitest and the dearest covenant can be made between God and man, we being now his adopted sons, and nothing fitter for us to think on than to be like him, united to him, and, as he pleases to express it, to have fellowship with him; it is all necessity that we should expect this blessed efficacy of healing our inward man to be ministered to us in a more familiar and effectual method than ever before. God being now no more a judge after the sentence of the law, nor, as it were, a schoolmaster of perishable rites, but a most indulgent father governing his church as a family of sons in their discreet age; and therefore, in the sweetest and mildest manner of paternal discipline, he hath committed this other office of preserving in healthful constitution the inner man, which may be termed the spirit of the soul, to his spiritual deputy the minister of each congregation; who being best acquainted with his own flock, hath best reason to know all the secretest diseases likely to be there. And looke, by how much the internal man is more excellent and noble than the external, by so much is his cure more exactly, more thoroughly, and more particularly to be performed. For which cause the Holy Ghost by the apostles, joined to the minister,

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<sup>174</sup> Robert Filmer's *The Anarchy of Limited Monarchy* (1648, p. 6) says that in Adam's ordination "to rule over his Wife . . . we have the originall grant of Government, & the fountain of all power placed in the *father* of all mankind; accordingly we find the *law* for obedience to government given in the tearms of *honor thy Father.*"

as assistant in this great office, sometimes a certain number of grave and faithful brethren<sup>175</sup> (for neither doth the physician do all in restoring his patient; he prescribes, another prepares the medicine; some tend, some watch, some visit) much more may a minister partly not see all, partly err as a man: besides that nothing can be more for the mutual honor and love of the people to their pastor, and his to them, than when in select numbers and courses they are seen partaking and doing reverence to the holy duties of discipline by their serviceable and solemn presence, and receiving honor again from their employment, not now any more to be separated in the church by veils and partitions as laics and unclean, but admitted to wait upon the tabernacle as the rightful clergy of Christ, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifice in that meet place to which God and the congregation shall call and assign them. And this all Christians ought to know, that the title of clergy St. Peter gave to all God's people, till pope Higinus<sup>176</sup> and the succeeding prelates took it from them, appropriating that name to themselves and their priests only; and condemning the rest of God's inheritance to an injurious and alienate condition of laity, they separated from them by local partitions in churches, through their gross ignorance and pride imitating the old temple, and excluded the members of Christ from the property of being members, the bearing of orderly and fit offices in the ecclesiastical body, as if they had meant to sew up that Jewish veil which Christ by his death on the cross rent in sunder. Although these usurpers could not

<sup>175</sup> Milton thought of Christ's command that injured brothers should plead with those who had offended them, if necessary, taking "one or two" with them, "that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt. xviii, 15-7), and of Paul's plea to the Thessalonians (II Thes. v, 12) "to know them which . . . are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." Cf. Introduction, #19.

<sup>176</sup> The Smectymnuans anticipated this attack on Hyginus in *An Answer* (p. 23) by grouping him with five others "whom the Papists call *Bishops*, and the popes *predecessours*," and by asserting that he is called a *presbyter* by Eusebius. In *The Ecclesiastical History* IV, x-xi, however, he is clearly recognized as the ninth bishop of Rome, and as having held the see for four years ?141-44 A.D. The *Liber Pontificalis* seems to be the source of the tradition that he drastically reorganized his clergy.



so presently overmaster the liberties and lawful titles of God's freeborn church, but that Origen,<sup>177</sup> being yet a layman, expounded the scriptures publicly and was therein defended by Alexander of Jerusalem and Theoctistus of Cæsarea, producing in his behalf divers examples that the privilege of teaching was anciently permitted to many worthy laymen: and Cyprian<sup>178</sup> in his epistles professes he will do nothing without the advice and assent of his assistant laics. Neither did the first Nicene<sup>179</sup> council, as great and learned as it was, think it any robbery to receive in and require the help and presence of many learned lay-brethren, as they were then called. Many other authorities to confirm this assertion both out of scripture and the

<sup>177</sup> Fleeing from Caracalla's persecution at Alexandria (216 A.D.), Origen "was cordially welcomed by his old friend, Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, and subsequently by Theoctistes, Bishop of Caesarea, who jointly invited him to give expository lectures in their churches. . . . Although a layman, Origen acquiesced, to the no small displeasure of his own bishop, Demetrius. . . . The Palestinian bishops were able to plead precedents for what they had done," but when Demetrius insisted, Origen returned to Alexandria "as a teacher and student." (W. Fairweather, *Origen and Greek Patristic Theology*, 1901, p. 50.) In *A Defence of the Government* (p. 426) Bishop Bridges had admitted the point that Origen and several other Greek Fathers taught in churches as laymen. Cf. Introduction #26.

<sup>178</sup> Although Cyprian (?200-258 A.D.), the first African bishop martyr, insisted on the divine origin and authority of his order, he was careful to secure the support of his clergy, especially in matters involving church unity. His *Letters* (especially 5 and 10) were famous for their stress upon the participation of his presbyters in the assemblies which voted the adherence of his diocese to Pope Cornelius. Straining the evidence of such letters, the Smectymnuans wrote: "*Cyprian professeth, that hee would doe nothing without the Clergie; nay, he could doe nothing without them; nay, he durst not take upon him alone to determine that which of right did belong to all.*" (*An Answer*, p. 38.)

<sup>179</sup> At the Nicene Council (325 A.D.), says the church historian Socrates Scholasticus, "There were present also many of the laity, which were skillfull Logicians. . . . Before the Bishops met together, . . . the Logicians busied themselves propounding against divers others certain preambles of disputation, and when divers were thus drawne to disputation, . . . a Layman . . . of a simple and sincere mind set himselfe against the Logicians, told them thus in plaine wordes: that neither Christ nor his Apostles had delivered unto us the art of Logicke, . . . but an open and plaine mind to be preserved of us with faith and good workes." (Meredith Hanmer's translation, 1636, p. 221.)

writings of next antiquity, Golartius<sup>180</sup> hath collected in his notes upon Cyprian; whereby it will be evident that the laity, not only by apostolic permission but by consent of many the ancientest prelates, did participate in church offices as much as is desired any lay-elder should now do. Sometimes also not the elders alone, but the whole body of the church is interested in the work of discipline, as oft as public satisfaction is given by those that have given public scandal. Not to speak now of her right in elections. But another reason there is in it, which though religion did not commend to us, yet moral and civil prudence could not but extol. It was thought of old in philosophy that shame,<sup>181</sup> or to call it better, the reverence of our elders, our brethren, and friends, was the greatest incitement to virtuous deeds and the greatest dissuasion from unworthy attempts that might be. Hence we may read in the *Iliad*, where Hector<sup>182</sup> being wished to retire from the battle, many of his forces being routed, makes answer that he durst not for shame, lest the Trojan knights and dames should think he did ignobly. And certain it is, that whereas terror is thought such a great stickler in a commonwealth, honorable shame is a far greater, and has more reason. For where shame is, there is fear, but where fear is, there is not presently shame. And if anything may be done to inbreed in us this generous and Christianly reverence one of another, the very nurse and guardian of piety and virtue, it cannot sooner be than by such a discipline in the church as may use us to have in awe the assemblies of the faithful, and to count it a thing most grievous, next to the grieving of God's Spirit, to offend those whom he hath put in

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<sup>180</sup> S. Goulart the elder edited Cyprian in 1593 and revised and reissued the work at Paris in 1603 and 1607.

<sup>181</sup> Perhaps Milton thought of the modesty which Plato attributes (*Phaedrus* 253d) to the white horse which symbolizes the soul's best aspirations, or of the ending of Seneca's *Epistle* xi, "On Shame," which suggests that all serious men should follow the maxim of Epicurus which advises them to choose some revered person and live constantly as if they were in his presence.

<sup>182</sup> For the background of this allusion to *Iliad* XXII, 100, in Milton's mind cf. the first *Oratorical Performance*, note 1.

authority as a healing superintendence over our lives and behaviours, both to our own happiness and that we may not give offence to good men, who, without amends by us made, dare not against God's command hold communion with us in holy things. And this will be accompanied with a religious dread of being outcast from the company of saints and from the fatherly protection of God in his church, to consort with the devil and his angels. But there is yet a more ingenuous and noble degree of honest shame, or call it, if you will, an esteem, whereby men bear an inward reverence toward their own persons. And if the love of God, as a fire sent from heaven to be ever kept alive upon the altars of our hearts, be the first principle of all godly and virtuous actions in men, this pious and just honoring of ourselves is the second, and may be thought as the radical moisture and fountain-head whence every laudable and worthy enterprise issues forth. And although I have given it the name of a liquid thing,<sup>183</sup> yet is it not incontinent to bound itself, as humid things are, but hath in it a most restraining and powerful abstinence to start back and globe itself upward from the mixture of any ungenerous and unbecoming motion or any soil wherewith it may peril to stain itself. Something I confess it is to be ashamed of evil-doing in the presence of any, and to reverence the opinion and the countenance of a good man rather than a bad, fearing most in his sight to offend, goes so far as almost to be virtuous; yet this is but still the fear of infamy, and many such, when they find themselves alone, saving their reputation, will compound with other scruples and come to a close treaty with their dearer vices in secret. But he that holds himself in reverence and due esteem, both for the dignity of God's image upon him and for the price of his redemption, which he thinks is visibly marked upon his forehead, accounts himself both a fit person to do the

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<sup>183</sup> Perhaps the strange conception of love as a liquid force urgently springing up in the soul owes something to Plato's similar attempt to describe it in half-scientific and half-sensuous terms in *Phaedrus* 251c-e. Throughout the following passage the thought remains vaguely Platonic.

noblest and godliest deeds, and much better worth than to deject and defile with such a debasement and such a pollution as sin is, himself so highly ransomed and ennobled to a new friendship and filial relation with God. Nor can he fear so much the offence and reproach of others, as he dreads and would blush at the reflection of his own severe and modest eye upon himself, if it should see him doing or imagining that which is sinful, though in the deepest secrecy. How shall a man know to do himself this right, how to perform this honorable duty of estimation and respect towards his own soul and body? Which way will lead him best to this hill-top of sanctity and goodness above which there is no higher ascent but to the love of God, which from this self-pious regard cannot be asunder? No better way doubtless than to let him duly understand, that as he is called by the high calling of God to be holy and pure, so is he by the same appointment ordained, and by the church's call admitted, to such offices of discipline in the church, to which his own spiritual gifts by the example of apostolic institution have authorized him. For we have learned that the scornful term of laic, the consecrating of temples, carpets, and tablecloths, the railing in of a repugnant and contradictive mount Sinai<sup>184</sup> in the gospel, as if the touch of a lay-christian, who is nevertheless God's living temple, could profane dead judaisms, the exclusion of Christ's people from the offices of holy discipline through the pride of a usurping clergy causes the rest to have an unworthy and abject opinion of themselves, to approach to holy duties with a slavish fear and to unholy doings with a familiar boldness. For seeing such a wide and terrible distance between religious things and

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<sup>184</sup> Before the ceremonial and moral laws were revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, God commanded him to "set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death." (Ex. xix, 12.) Archbishop Laud's policy of railing in the communion table seemed to the Puritans to be one of the most offensive aspects of his effort to exclude laymen from their full privileges and exalt the clergy to a position analogous with that enjoyed by the priests as their order was constituted by the ceremonial law of Moses.



themselves, and that in respect of a wooden table and the perimeter of holy ground about it, a flagon pot and a linen corporal,<sup>185</sup> the priest esteems their layships unhallowed and unclean, they fear religion with such a fear as loves not, and think the purity of the gospel too pure for them, and that any uncleanness is more suitable to their unconsecrated estate. But when every good Christian, thoroughly acquainted with all those glorious privileges of sanctification<sup>186</sup> and adoption which render him more sacred than any dedicated altar or element, shall be restored to his right in the church, and not excluded from such place of spiritual government as his Christian abilities and his approved good life in the eye and testimony of the church shall prefer him to, this and nothing sooner will open his eyes to a wise and true valuation of himself, which is so requisite and high a point of Christianity, and will stir him up to walk worthy the honorable and grave employment wherewith God and the church hath dignified him; not fearing lest he should meet with some outward holy thing in religion, which his lay-touch or presence might profane, but lest something unholy from within his own heart should dishonor and profane in himself that priestly unction and clergy-right whereto Christ hath entitled him. Then would the congregation of the Lord soon recover the true likeness and visage of what she is indeed, a holy generation, a royal priesthood,<sup>187</sup> a saintly communion, the

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<sup>185</sup> *corporal*: a communion cloth.

<sup>186</sup> Building upon scriptures like Hebrews x, 10, the Assembly of Divines sitting at Westminster when Milton wrote these words finally (in the Confession of 1647, chapter 12) defined Adoption as the grace whereby Christians are "taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God; have his name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption; have access to the throne of grace with boldness; are enabled to cry, Abba, Father; are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a father." The next chapter defines sanctification as a state in which, by the indwelling spirit of Christ, "the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof weakened and mortified"; so that Christians are "more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Cf. Milton, *Of Christian Doctrine*, I, xvii-xviii.

<sup>187</sup> Milton built upon a verse often quoted by champions of the doc-

household and city of God. And this I hold to be another considerable reason why the functions of church government ought to be free and open to any Christian man, though never so laic, if his capacity, his faith, and prudent demeanor commend him. And this the apostles warrant us to do. But the prelates object that this will bring profaneness into the church; to whom may be replied that none have brought that in more than their own irreligious courses, nor more driven holiness out of living into lifeless things. For whereas God, who hath cleansed every beast and creeping worm, would not suffer St. Peter to call them common or unclean,<sup>188</sup> the prelate bishops, in their printed orders hung up in churches, have proclaimed the best of creatures, mankind, so unpurified and contagious, that for him to lay his hat or his garment upon the chancel table they have defined it no less heinous, in express words, than to profane the table of the Lord. And thus have they by their Canaanitish doctrine<sup>189</sup> (for that which was to the Jew but Jewish, is to the Christian no better than Canaanitish), thus have they made common and unclean, thus have they made profane that nature which God hath not only cleansed, but Christ also hath assumed. And now that the equity and just reason is so perspicuous, why in ecclesiastic censure the assistance should be added of such as whom not the vile odor of

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trine of the right of all Christians to be regarded as priests rather than mere laymen: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (I Pet. ii, 9). Since Calvin had declared (*Institutes* III, xix) the liberty of Christians from the Jewish ceremonial and civil law, this verse had been a rallying cry of all who challenged the rights of any hierarchy which seemed to derive in any way from the Jewish priesthood.

<sup>188</sup> In a vision teaching that the Jewish ceremonial law which stigmatized the gentiles as unclean had been abrogated, St. Peter saw "four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air"; and he heard "a voice saying, Arise, Peter; slay and eat." To his objection that the beasts were unclean the voice answered "from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." (Acts xi, 5-10.)

<sup>189</sup> The Canaanites, whom the Israelites drove out of Palestine when they settled the land, remained a byword among them for idolatry.

gain and fees (forbid it, God, and blow it with a whirlwind out of our land), but charity, neighborhood, and duty to church government hath called together, where could a wise man wish a more equal, gratuitous, and meek examination of any offence, that he might happen to commit against Christianity, than here? Would he prefer those proud simoniacal<sup>190</sup> courts? Thus therefore the minister assisted attends his heavenly and spiritual cure: where we shall see him both in the course of his proceeding, and first in the excellency of his end, from the magistrate far different, and not more different than excelling. His end is to recover all that is of man, both soul and body, to an everlasting health; and yet as for worldly happiness, which is the proper sphere wherein the magistrate cannot but confine his motion without a hideous exorbitancy from law, so little aims the minister, as his intended scope, to procure the much prosperity of this life, that oftentimes he may have cause to wish much of it away, as a diet puffing up the soul with a slimy fleshiness and weakening her principal organic parts. Two heads of evil he has to cope with, ignorance and malice. Against the former he provides the daily manna of incorruptible doctrine, not at those set meals only in public, but as oft as he shall know that each infirmity or constitution requires. Against the latter with all the branches thereof, not meddling with that restraining and styptic surgery<sup>191</sup> which the law uses, not indeed against the malady but against the eruptions and outermost effects thereof; he on the contrary, beginning at the prime causes and roots of the disease, sends in those two divine ingredients of most cleansing power to the soul, admonition and reproof, besides which two there is no drug or antidote

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<sup>190</sup> Simony is the crime of buying or selling preferment in the church, or—more broadly—of trafficking in its authority in any way. The bishops' courts, which controlled questions of marriage, divorce, and other matters which had come to seem purely civil, often had to face that charge from the Puritans.

<sup>191</sup> In the background is Plato's presentation of Socrates as a physician for the Athenians who believes that he has a duty to continue his caustic criticism of their lives even though it will make him fatally unpopular. (*Gorgias*, 521a–522d.) Cf. note 22 above.

that can reach to purge the mind, and without which all other experiments are but vain, unless by accident. And he that will not let these pass into him, though he be the greatest king, as Plato<sup>192</sup> affirms, must be thought to remain impure within and unknowing of those things wherein his pureness and his knowledge should most appear. As soon therefore as it may be discerned that the Christian patient, by feeding elsewhere on meats not allowable but of evil juice, hath disordered his diet and spread an ill-humor through his veins, immediately disposing to a sickness, the minister, as being much nearer both in eye and duty than the magistrate, speeds him betimes to overtake that diffused malignance with some gentle potion of admonishment; or if aught be obstructed, puts in his opening and discussive confections.<sup>193</sup> This not succeeding after once or twice, or oftener, in the presence of two or three his faithful brethren appointed thereto, he advises him to be more careful of his dearest health, and what it is that he so rashly hath let down into the divine vessel of his soul, God's temple.<sup>194</sup> If this obtain not, he then, with the counsel of more assistants who are informed of what diligence hath been already used, with more speedy remedies lays nearer siege to the entrenched causes of his distemper, not sparing such fervent and well-aimed reproofs as may best give him to see the dangerous estate wherein he is. To this also his brethren and friends entreat, exhort, adjure, and all these endeavours, as there is hope left, are more or less repeated. But if neither the regard of himself nor the reverence of his elders and friends prevail with him to leave his vicious appetite, then as the time urges, such engines of terror God hath given into the hand of his minister as to search the tenderest angles of the heart: one while he shakes his stub-

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<sup>192</sup> Here Milton thought of the myth at the end of the *Gorgias* (525a-d), where Socrates describes the moderate punishments after death of those "who have profited by the correction of gods and men," in contrast with the severity to be shown, even though they were kings, to those who have been utterly recalcitrant.

<sup>193</sup> *discussive*: dissipative (of morbid matter in the body).

<sup>194</sup> "Ye are the temple of the Lord." (1 Cor. iii, 16.)



bornness with racking convulsions nigh despair, otherwhiles with deadly corrosives he gripes the very roots of his faulty liver to bring him to life through the entry of death. Hereto the whole church beseech him, beg of him, deplore him, pray for him. After all this performed with what patience and attendance is possible, and no relenting on his part, having done the utmost of their cure, in the name of God and of the church they dissolve their fellowship with him, and holding forth the dreadful sponge of excommunication,<sup>195</sup> pronounce him wiped out of the list of God's inheritance and in the custody of Satan till he repent. Which horrid sentence, though it touch neither life nor limb, nor any worldly possession, yet has it such a penetrating force that swifter than any chemical sulphur or that lightning which harms not the skin and rifles the entrails, it scorches the inmost soul. Yet even this terrible denouncement is left to the church for no other cause but to be as a rough and vehement cleansing medicine where the malady is obdurate, a mortifying to life, a kind of saving by undoing. And it may be truly said that as the mercies of wicked men are cruelties, so the cruelties of the church are mercies. For if repentance sent from Heaven meet this lost wanderer and draw him out of that steep journey wherein he was hasting towards destruction, to come and reconcile to the church, if he bring with him his bill of health, and that he is now clear of infection and of no danger to the other sheep; then with incredible expressions of joy all his brethren receive him and set before him those perfumed banquets of Christian consolation; with precious ointments bathing and fomenting the old and now to be forgotten stripes, which terror and shame had inflicted; and thus with heavenly solaces they cheer up his humble remorse, till he regain his first health and felicity. This is the approved way which the gospel prescribes, these are the "spiritual weapons of holy censure, and ministerial warfare, not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, cast-

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<sup>195</sup> *excommunication*: excommunication. For the background of the entire passage cf. Introduction #19.

ing down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."<sup>196</sup> What could be done more for the healing and reclaiming that divine particle of God's breathing, the soul?<sup>197</sup> And what could be done less? He that would hide his faults from such a wholesome curing as this, and count it a twofold punishment, as some do, is like a man that having foul diseases about him, perishes for shame and the fear he has of a rigorous incision to come upon his flesh. We shall be able by this time to discern whether prelatial jurisdiction be contrary to the gospel or no. First, therefore, the government of the gospel being economical<sup>198</sup> and paternal, that is, of such a family where there be no servants, but all sons in obedience, not in servility,<sup>199</sup> as cannot be denied by him that lives but within the sound of scripture; how can the prelates justify to have turned the fatherly orders of Christ's household, the blessed meekness of his lowly roof, those ever-open and inviting doors of his dwelling house, which delight to be frequented with only filial accesses, how can they justify to have turned these domestic privileges into the bar of a proud judicial court, where fees and clamors keep shop and drive a trade, where bribery and corruption solicits, paltering the free and moneyless power of discipline with a carnal satisfaction by the purse. Contrition, humiliation, confession, the very sighs of a repentant spirit, are there sold by the penny. That undeflowered and unblemishable simplicity of the Gospel, not she herself, for that could never be, but a false-whited, a lawny resemblance of her, like that air-born<sup>200</sup> Helena in the

<sup>196</sup> II Corinthians x, 4-5.

<sup>197</sup> "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." (Gen. ii, 7.)

<sup>198</sup> *economical*: relating to the family, domestic.

<sup>199</sup> "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. viii, 14-5.)

<sup>200</sup> Milton perhaps thought of the story as told by Euripides, *Helen*, 31-51, that Hera deceived Paris with a phantom Helen, whom he took to Troy, while Hermes took the real Helen to Egypt.

fables, made by the sorcery of prelates, instead of calling her disciples from the receipt of custom, is now turned publican herself; and gives up her body to a mercenary whoredom under those fornicated arches, which she calls God's house, and in the sight of those her altars, which she hath set up to be adored, makes merchandise of the bodies and souls of men. Rejecting purgatory for no other reason, as it seems, than because her greediness cannot defer but had rather use the utmost extortion of redeemed penances in this life. But because these matters could not be thus carried without a begged and borrowed force from worldly authority, therefore prelaty, slighting the deliberate and chosen council of Christ in his spiritual government, whose glory is in the weakness of fleshly things,<sup>201</sup> to tread upon the crest of the world's pride and violence by the power of spiritual ordinances, hath on the contrary made these her friends and champions which are Christ's enemies in this his high design, smothering and extinguishing the spiritual force of his bodily weakness in the discipline of his church with the boisterous and carnal tyranny of an undue, unlawful, and ungospel-like jurisdiction. And thus prelaty, both in her fleshly supportments, in her carnal doctrine of ceremony and tradition, in her violent and secular power, going quite counter to the prime end of Christ's coming in the flesh, that is, to reveal his truth, his glory, and his might, in a clean contrary manner than prelaty seeks to do, thwarting and defeating the great mystery of God; I do not conclude that prelaty is anti-christian, for what need I? The things themselves conclude it. Yet if such like practices, and not many worse than these of our prelates, in that great darkness of the Roman church, have not exempted both her and her present members from being judged to be antichristian in all orthodoxal esteem; I cannot think but that it is the absolute voice of truth and all her children to pronounce this prelaty, and these her dark deeds in

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<sup>201</sup> "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." (II Cor. i, 12.)

the midst of this great light wherein we live, to be more anti-christian than antichrist himself.

## THE CONCLUSION.

### *The mischief that Prelaty does in the State.*

I ADD one thing more to those great ones that are so fond of prelaty: this is certain, that the gospel being the hidden might of Christ, as hath been heard, hath ever a victorious power joined with it, like him in the Revelation that went forth on the white horse with his bow and his crown, conquering and to conquer.<sup>202</sup> If we let the angel of the gospel ride on his own way, he does his proper business, conquering the high thoughts and the proud reasonings of the flesh, and brings them under to give obedience to Christ with the salvation of many souls. But if ye turn him out of his road, and in a manner force him to express his irresistible power by a doctrine of carnal might, as prelaty is, he will use that fleshly strength which ye put into his hands to subdue your spirits by a servile and blind superstition; and that again shall hold such dominion over your captive minds, as returning with an insatiate greediness and force upon your worldly wealth and power, wherewith to deck and magnify herself and her false worships, she shall spoil and havoc your estates, disturb your ease, diminish your honor, enthrall your liberty under the swelling mood of a proud clergy who will not serve or feed your souls with spiritual food; look not for it, they have not wherewithal, or if they had, it is not in their purpose. But when they have glutted their ungrateful bodies, at least if it be possible that those open sepulchres should ever be glutted, and when they have stuffed their idolish temples with the wasteful pillage of your estates, will they yet have any compassion upon you and that poor pittance which they have left you; will they be but so good to you as that

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<sup>202</sup> The allusion is to Revelation vi, 2, and xix, 11. Cf. Introduction #22.



ravisher was to his sister, when he had used her at his pleasure;<sup>203</sup> will they but only hate ye, and so turn ye loose? No, they will not, Lords and Commons, they will not favor ye so much. What will they do then, in the name of God and saints, what will these manhaters yet with more despite and mischief do? I'll tell ye, or at least remember ye, for most of ye know it already. That they may want nothing to make them true merchants of Babylon,<sup>204</sup> as they have done to your souls, they will sell your bodies, your wives, your children, your liberties, your parliaments, all these things; and if there be aught else dearer than these, they will sell at an outcry in their pulpits to the arbitrary and illegal dispose of any one that may hereafter be called a king, whose mind shall serve him to listen to their bargain. And by their corrupt and servile doctrines boring our ears to an everlasting slavery,<sup>205</sup> as they have done hitherto, so will they yet do their best to repeal and erase every line and clause of both our great charters. Nor is this only what they will do, but what they hold as the main reason and mystery of their advancement that they must do; be the prince never so just and equal to his subjects, yet such are their malicious and depraved eyes that they so look on him and so understand him, as if he required no other gratitude or piece of service from

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<sup>203</sup> Milton refers to Amnon's incestuous violence to Tamar and his subsequent hatred of her, "so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her." (II Sam. xiii, 15.)

<sup>204</sup> Milton is voicing the bitter Puritan resentment of the defense of the royal power and even of such abuses of it as ship-money by the bishops in their sermons at court and elsewhere. Because Puritan prejudice identified them with the Roman Catholics, and because Rome was often called Babylon in Puritan parlance, he called them merchants of Babylon. Compare the popular saying: "All Babylon lies low; Luther destroyed the roof thereof, Calvin the walls, but Socinus the foundations." Cf. Rev. xviii, 10-11.

<sup>205</sup> The master of the Hebrew slave who voluntarily sought life-long servitude was to "bore his ear through with an awl" (Ex. xxi, 6) as a sign that his bondage was "forever." Puritan resistance to King Charles's infractions of popular rights constantly stressed Magna Charta and the Charter of Forests (1215 and 1216 respectively) as the foundation of the liberties which were vindicated by the Petition of Right, to which the king assented 7 June, 1628.

them than this. And indeed they stand so opportunely for the disturbing or the destroying of a state, being a knot of creatures whose dignities, means, and preferments have no foundation in the gospel, as they themselves acknowledge, but only in the prince's favor, and to continue so long to them, as by pleasing him they shall deserve: whence it must needs be they should bend all their intentions and services to no other ends but to his, that if it should happen that a tyrant (God turn such a scourge from us to our enemies) should come to grasp the sceptre, here were his spearmen and his lances, here were his firelocks ready, he should need no other Prætorian band<sup>206</sup> nor pensionary than these, if they could once with their perfidious preachments awe the people. For although the prelates in time of popery were sometimes friendly enough to Magna Charta,<sup>207</sup> it was because they stood upon their own bottom, without their main dependence on the royal nod: but now being well acquainted that the protestant religion, if she will reform herself rightly by the scriptures, must undress them of all their gilded vanities and reduce them as they were at first to the lowly and equal order of presbyters, they know it concerns them nearly to study the times more than the text, and to lift up their eyes to the hills<sup>208</sup> of the court from whence only comes their help; but if their pride grow weary of this crouching and observance, as ere long it would, and that yet their minds climb still to a higher ascent of worldly honor, this only refuge can remain to them, that they must of necessity contrive to bring themselves and us back again to the pope's supremacy; and this we see they had by fair degrees of late been doing. These be the two fair supporters between which

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<sup>206</sup> The bishops, Milton suggests, are threatening to become mere pensioners of the king and to make him the nominal head of a tyranny like that which the Prætorian guards of the Roman emperors developed under the pretense of protecting the imperial power and the rights of the emperors.

<sup>207</sup> Several bishops took an active part in extorting Magna Charta from King John in 1215, but their motives were always unfavorably interpreted by the Puritans. Cf. Introduction #21.

<sup>208</sup> An ironical application of Psalm cxxi, 1.

the strength of prelaty is borne up, either of inducing tyranny, or of reducing popery.<sup>209</sup> Hence also we may judge that prelaty is mere falsehood. For the property of truth is, where she is publicly taught, to unyoke and set free the minds and spirits of a nation first from the thralldom of sin and superstition, after which all honest and legal freedom of civil life cannot be long absent; but prelaty, whom the tyrant custom<sup>210</sup> begot, a natural tyrant in religion, and in state the agent and minister of tyranny, seems to have had this fatal gift in her nativity, like another Midas, that whatsoever she should touch or come near either in ecclesial or political government, it should turn, not to gold, though she for her part could wish it, but to the dross and scum of slavery, breeding and settling both in the bodies and the souls of all such as do not in time, with the sovran treacle<sup>211</sup> of sound doctrine, provide to fortify their hearts against her hierarchy. The service of God, who is truth, her liturgy confesses to be perfect freedom,<sup>212</sup> but her works and her opinions declare, that the service of prelaty is perfect slavery, and by consequence perfect falsehood. Which makes me wonder much that many of the gentry, studious men as I hear, should engage themselves to write and speak publicly in her defence; but that I believe their honest and ingenuous natures coming to the universities to store themselves with good and solid learning and there unfortunately fed with nothing else but the scragged and thorny lectures of monkish and miserable sophistry,<sup>213</sup> were sent home again with such a scholastic

<sup>209</sup> *reducing*: bringing back. Archbishop Laud's opponents, says Mr. Trevor-Roper (*Laud*, p. 306) "continually . . . attacked him as a Papist himself: and the charge, though we can see that it was untrue, was natural: nor was the subtle difference between the new high anglicanism and the old Rome likely to be appreciated by ears attuned to Puritan hysterics."

<sup>210</sup> Cf. the attack on custom in the opening paragraph of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*.

<sup>211</sup> *treacle*: originally, a remedy against the bites of poisonous creatures; a powerful antidote or medicine of any kind.

<sup>212</sup> The Collect for Peace in the Anglican Liturgy reads: "O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom; defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies. . . ."

burr in their throats as hath stopped and hindered all true and generous philosophy from entering, cracked their voices for ever with metaphysical gargarisms,<sup>214</sup> and hath made them admire a sort of formal outside men prelatically addicted; whose unchastened and unwrought minds (never yet initiated or subdued under the true lore of religion or moral virtue, which two are the best and greatest points of learning, but either slightly trained up in a kind of hypocritical and hackney course of literature to get their living by and dazzle the ignorant, or else fondly over-studied in useless controversies, except those which they use with all the specious and delusive subtlety they are able, to defend their prelatical Sparta<sup>215</sup>) having a gospel and church government set before their eyes, as a fair field wherein they might exercise the greatest virtues and the greatest deeds of Christian authority, in mean fortunes and little furniture of this world (which even the sage heathen writers, and those old Fabritii and Curii<sup>216</sup> well knew to be a manner of working, than which nothing could liken a mortal man more to God, who delights most to work from within himself, and not by the heavy luggage of corporeal instruments) they understand it not, and think no such matter, but admire and dote upon worldly riches and honors, with an easy and intemperate life, to the bane of Christianity. Yea, they and their seminaries shame not to profess, to petition, and never lin pealing<sup>217</sup> our ears, that unless we fat them like boars, and cram them as they list with wealth, with deaneries and plurali-

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<sup>213</sup> Cf. Introduction #2, the attack on the medieval corruption of the universities in the seventh *Oratorical Performance*, and the attack on "universities not yet recovered from scholastic grossness" in *Of Education*.

<sup>214</sup> *gargarisms*: gargles.

<sup>215</sup> Churchmen who enjoyed theological controversy, Milton suggests, are like the ancient Spartans, good but rough defenders of their city, sacrificing both character and culture to brutal gladiatorial skill.

<sup>216</sup> Gaius Fabricius was famous in Roman history for having refused the bribes of King Pyrrhus when they were negotiating about an exchange of prisoners in 282 B.C., and for his severity when he became censor in 275. His contemporary, Marcus Curius Dentatus, defeated Pyrrhus in that year and refused his immense share, as a consul, in the booty.

<sup>217</sup> *lin*: cease. *pealing*: assailing with noise, nagging. Cf. *S. A.*, 235.



ties,<sup>218</sup> with baronies and stately preferments, all learning and religion will go underfoot. Which is such a shameless, such a bestial plea, and of that odious impudence in churchmen, who should be to us a pattern of temperance and frugal mediocrity,<sup>219</sup> who should teach us to condemn this world and the gaudy things thereof, according to the promise which they themselves require from us in baptism,<sup>220</sup> that should the scripture stand by and be mute, there is not that sect of philosophers among the heathen so dissolute, no not Epicurus, nor Aristippus<sup>221</sup> with all his Cyrenaic rout, but would shut his school-doors against such greasy sophisters; not any college of mountebanks, but would think scorn to discover<sup>222</sup> in themselves with such a brazen forehead the outrageous desire of filthy lucre. Which the prelates make so little conscience of that they are ready to fight and, if it lay in their power, to massacre all good Christians under the names of horrible schismatics, for only finding fault with their temporal dignities, their unconscionable wealth and revenues, their cruel authority over their brethren that labor in the word, while they snore in their luxurious excess: openly proclaiming themselves now in

<sup>218</sup> *pluralities*: enjoyment of two or more benefices simultaneously by a clergyman. In defending them in *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* V, lxxxii, Hooker first inveighed as vigorously as any Puritan could against their abuse, but committed himself (#7) to them "by way of honour to learning, nobility, and authority." "The brethren and sons of lords temporal and knights, if God shall move the hearts of such to enter at any time into holy orders," he felt, should "obtain to themselves a faculty or license to hold two ecclesiastical livings."

<sup>219</sup> *mediocrity*: moderate estate, humble style of living.

<sup>220</sup> The Anglican Liturgy asks the sponsors of a child at baptism to renounce on his behalf "the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all the covetous desires of the same. . . ."

<sup>221</sup> "Who can but pity the virtuous Epicurus," asked Thomas Browne in *Vulgar Errors* VII, xvii, "who is commonly conceived to have placed his chief felicity in pleasure and sensual delights, and hath therefore left an infamous name behind him? . . . The ground hereof seems a misapprehension of his opinion, who placed his felicity not in the pleasures of the body, but the mind, and tranquillity thereof, obtained by wisdom and virtue." Aristippus was traditionally regarded as "luxurious," but Milton perhaps remembered that he left his native Cyrene to spend years in study with Socrates in Athens.

<sup>222</sup> *discover*: expose, exhibit.

the sight of all men to be those which for a while they sought to cover under sheep's clothing, ravenous and savage wolves<sup>223</sup> threatening inroads and bloody incursions upon the flock of Christ, which they took upon them to feed, but now claim to devour as their prey. More like that huge dragon of Egypt breathing out waste and desolation to the land, unless he were daily fattened with virgin's blood. Him our old patron St. George<sup>224</sup> by his matchless valor slew, as the prelate of the garter that reads his collect<sup>225</sup> can tell. And if our princes and knights will imitate the fame of that old champion, as by their order of knighthood solemnly taken they vow, far be it that they should uphold and side with this English dragon; but rather to do as indeed their oath binds them, they should make it their knightly adventure to pursue and vanquish this mighty

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Introduction #21.

<sup>224</sup> One early version of the St. George legend localizes the dragon near Selena in Libya, and the tale finds some support from inscriptions in ancient Egyptian churches. Though Milton does not refer to Spenser's story of a dragon which represents the Roman hierarchy and is slain by a St. George who is the British champion (*Faerie Queene* I, xi), he knew that his readers would enjoy his suggestion that King Charles's Knights of the Garter, whose patron was St. George, should destroy the prelatical dragon and rescue the innocent virgin whom he identifies, like Spenser, with the daughter of the King of Heaven, the Church.

<sup>225</sup> The collect in question occurs in the *Primer according to the Usage of Salisbury* and is translated by Peter Heylin in *The History of that most famous Saynt and Souldier of Christ Jesus, St. George of Cappadocia* (1631) in this way, in part:

George, holy Martyr, praise and fame  
Attend upon thy glorious name;  
Advanced to knightly dignitie:  
The Daughter of a King, by thee  
(As she was making grievous moane  
By a fierce Dragon, all alone)  
Was freed from death. Thee we entreat  
That we in Heaven may have a seat.

Puritan feeling had long been outraged by the admission of certain clergy to the Order of the Garter. Archbishop Whitgift devoted several pages in *The Defence of the Answer to the Admonition* (*The Works of John Whitgift*, Parker Society, 1853, III, 405 ff.) to a reply to the charge that it was "against the word of God . . . for an archbishop to be a lord president, a lord bishop to be a county palatine, a prelate of the Garter, who hath much to do at St. George's feast, when the Bible is carried before the procession in the cross's place," etc.

sail-winged monster that menaces to swallow up the land, unless her bottomless gorge may be satisfied with the blood of the king's daughter, the church; and may, as she was wont, fill her dark and infamous den with the bones of the saints. Nor will anyone have reason to think this as too incredible or too tragical to be spoken of prelaty, if he consider well from what a mass of slime and mud, the slothful, the covetous, and ambitious hopes of church-promotions and fat bishoprics, she is bred up and nuzzled in, like a great Python,<sup>226</sup> from her youth, to prove the general poison both of doctrine and good discipline in the land. For certainly such hopes and such principles of earth as these wherein she welters from a young one, are the immediate generation both of a slavish and tyrannous life to follow and a pestiferous contagion to the whole kingdom, till like that fen-born serpent she be shot to death with the darts of the sun, the pure and powerful beams of God's word. And this may serve to describe to us in part what prelaty hath been and what, if she stand, she is like to be towards the whole body of people in England. Now that it may appear how she is not such a kind of evil as hath any good or use in it, which many evils have, but a distilled quintessence, a pure elixir of mischief, pestilent alike to all, I shall show briefly, ere I conclude, that the prelates, as they are to the subjects a calamity, so are they the greatest underminers and betrayers of the monarch, to whom they seem to be most favorable. I cannot better liken the state and person of a king than to that mighty Nazarite Samson;<sup>227</sup> who, being disciplined

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<sup>226</sup> Ovid tells (*Metamorphoses* I, 433-51) the story of the slime-born serpent, Python, which Apollo, the sun god, slew with his darting rays. The myth goes back to the Homeric hymn to Apollo and was sometimes confused with that of the earth-born Typhon, a half-serpentine monster, whose attack upon the Olympian gods is sung in Hesiod's *Theogony* (820-880) and explained by Natale Conti (*Mythologiae* VI, xxii) as an allegory of tyrannous ambition attacking the laws of heaven.

<sup>227</sup> This dramatic outline of the story of Samson from Judges xiii-xvi, compares interestingly with Milton's plans for various dramas on the subject in the Cambridge Manuscript as well as with his treatment of it in the drama of *Samson Agonistes*.

from his birth in the precepts and the practice of temperance and sobriety, without the strong drink of injurious and excessive desires, grows up to a noble strength and perfection with those his illustrious and sunny locks, the laws,<sup>228</sup> waving and curling about his godlike shoulders. And while he keeps them about him undiminished and unshorn, he may with the jawbone of an ass, that is, with the word of his meanest officer, suppress and put to confusion thousands of those that rise against his just power. But laying down his head among the strumpet flatteries of prelates,<sup>229</sup> while he sleeps and thinks no harm, they, wickedly shaving off all those bright and weighty tresses of his laws and just prerogatives, which were his ornament and strength, deliver him over to indirect and violent counsels, which, as those Philistines, put out the fair and farsighted eyes of his natural discerning and make him grind in the prisonhouse of their sinister ends and practices upon him: till he, knowing this prelatical razor to have bereft him of his wonted might, nourish again his puissant hair, the golden beams of law and right; and they sternly shook, thunder with ruin upon the heads of those his evil counsellors, but not without great affliction to himself. This is the sum of their loyal service to kings; yet these are the men that still cry, "The king, the king, the Lord's anointed!" We grant it, and wonder how they came to light upon anything so true; and wonder more, if kings be the Lord's anointed, how they dare thus oil over and besmear so holy an unction with the corrupt and putrid oint-

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<sup>228</sup> This is a final allusion to Plato's *Laws*. In Book IV (715d) Law is said to be rightly lord over the magistrates, while they should be the servants of the Law. Plato saw prosperity and every blessing of the gods in states where that principle was honored, and ruin impending everywhere that it was violated. Cf. *Tenure*, note 40.

<sup>229</sup> Milton's thought here is a commonplace of Puritan propaganda. In *An Appeal to the Parliament* (p. 212) Leighton warned that Charles was about to "split upon the rocks of malicious Counsell, or sinke in the quicksands of base flatteries." The bishops, he said (p. 25) were "opposite to the King and his Lawes, in affirming their calling to be *jure divino*, because by his Laws they are said to be a part of his prerogative." The argument goes directly on to describe their attack on the king and the law as nothing short of treason.



ment of their base flatteries, which, while they smooth the skin, strike inward and envenom the lifeblood.<sup>230</sup> What fidelity kings can expect from prelates both examples past and our present experience of their doings at this day, whereon is grounded all that hath been said, may suffice to inform us. And if they be such clippers of regal power and shavers of the laws, how they stand affected to the lawgiving parliament, yourselves, worthy peers and commons, can best testify, the current of whose glorious and immortal actions hath been only opposed by the obscure and pernicious designs of the prelates, until their insolence broke out to such a bold affront as hath justly immured their haughty looks within strong walls.<sup>231</sup> Nor have they done anything of late with more diligence than to hinder or break the happy assembling of parliaments, however needful to repair the shattered and disjointed frame of the commonwealth, or if they cannot do this, to cross, to disenable, and traduce all parliamentary proceedings. And this, if nothing else, plainly accuses them to be no lawful members of the house, if they thus perpetually mutiny against their own body. And though they pretend, like Solomon's harlot,<sup>232</sup> that they have right thereto, by the same judgment that Solomon gave, it cannot belong to them, whenas it is not only their assent but their endeavor continually to divide parliaments in twain; and not only by dividing but by all other means to abol-

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<sup>230</sup> Cf. Lord Brooke's *Discourse opening the Nature of Episcopacy* (p. 60): "What meanes their crying up an unjust and illimited power in Princes? Is not This their bleating out of an illegal unwarranted Pre-rogative (with which our pulpits have rung of late) intended to tickle Princes till they be luld asleepe? or to sow pillowes under them, till They themselves can thrust them downe; not onely from that Tyranny which Bishops would perswade them to usurp, but also from their wholsome and lawfull prerogative?"

<sup>231</sup> In December, 1641, twelve bishops, who were afraid of rough handling by the mob, failed to attend the sessions of the House of Lords and made the mistake of protesting to Charles that all legislation passed in their absence was invalid. They were impeached for this illegal claim and ten of them were immediately placed in the Tower of London.

<sup>232</sup> I Kings iii, 16-27, tells the story of Solomon's judgment between two harlots who claimed the same child. At his command to "divide the living child in two," the true mother identified herself by yielding her claim.

ish and destroy the free use of them to all posterity. For the which and for all their former misdeeds, whereof this book and many volumes more cannot contain the moiety, I shall move ye, Lords, in the behalf I dare say of many thousand good Christians, to let your justice and speedy sentence pass against this great malefactor, prelaty. And yet in the midst of rigor I would beseech ye to think of mercy; and such a mercy (I fear I shall overshoot with a desire to save this falling prelaty), such a mercy (if I may venture to say it) as may exceed that which for only ten righteous persons would have saved Sodom.<sup>233</sup> Not that I dare advise ye to contend with God whether he or you shall be more merciful, but in your wise esteems to balance the offences of those peccant<sup>234</sup> cities with these enormous riots of ungodly misrule that prelaty hath wrought both in the church of Christ and in the state of this kingdom. And if ye think ye may with a pious presumption strive to go beyond God in mercy, I shall not be one now that would dissuade ye. Though God for less than ten just persons would not spare Sodom, yet if you can find after due search but only one good thing in prelaty, either to religion or civil government, to king or parliament, to prince or people, to law, liberty, wealth, or learning, spare her, let her live, let her spread among ye, till with her shadow all your dignities and honors, and all the glory of the land be darkened and obscured. But on the contrary, if she be found to be malignant, hostile, destructive to all these, as nothing can be surer, then let your severe and impartial doom imitate the divine vengeance; rain<sup>235</sup> down your punishing force upon this godless and oppressing government, and bring such a dead sea of subversion upon her that she may never in this land rise more to afflict the holy reformed church, and the elect people of God.

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<sup>233</sup> When Abraham asked God not to destroy Sodom if as many as ten righteous men were to be found there, he received God's promise that he would "not destroy it for ten's sake." (Gen. xviii, 32.)

<sup>234</sup> *peccant*: sinful.

<sup>235</sup> "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." (Gen. xix, 24.)